

DO WE SURVIVE BODILY DEATH?

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I. TWO PROBLEMS ABOUT SURVIVAL

When we talk about the possibility of our going on after the death of our bodies, we raise two questions that are somewhat different although closely related. The first is whether my stream of consciousness, my thoughts, feelings, perceptions and decisions, will go on after the death of my body as they do every morning after I wake up from my little death of sleep. This is the matter with which I myself am most concerned, but the other question might be the one that interested my friends and acquaintances. This is the question as to whether the Robert Thouless they have known and met still exists and might still be known and met after his body has died and has suffered such physical and chemical changes as decomposition or incineration.

These two questions may be called that of the survival of the stream of consciousness and that of the survival of personality. We can put this in other words and say that they are the questions: "Do I survive death?" and "Does he (or she) survive death?" They are obviously closely related

since the answer "Yes" to the second one seems to imply the same answer to the first one. On the other hand, it would be reasonable to answer "Yes" to the first question and "No" to the second; one can imagine the possibility of a continuing stream of consciousness without any possibility of it communicating with anybody else, although we may not think this very likely. It remains true that, if there were any communication from beyond the grave, this would be indirect evidence of the survival of a stream of consciousness.

Unfortunately, it can only be by such indirect evidence that we can find out whether other people's stream of consciousness continues after their death. On the other hand, if we ourselves survive death, we shall know this as directly as we know that we have survived the night when we wake up in the morning. But other people can have no such direct knowledge of the continuing of my stream of consciousness; they can only hope to know about this by the indirect method of finding out whether they can establish any sort of communication with my surviving personality.

No one will, of course, be interested in trying to do this unless he regards survival of death as an open possibility. If he is already convinced that the death of any individual must be the ending of all his conscious experience, the question will not be an open one. For one so convinced, the enterprise of trying to establish communication with the departed would not have any chance of succeeding, so the attempt will not be made.

This cannot be condemned as an unreasonable point of view. There is a great weight of common sense behind it as well as a powerful intellectual case for the view that mental activity is a function of the physical brain which must cease when that brain is no longer active as is undoubtedly the case after bodily death. All the same, although the reasons for holding the view that it is impossible that we should survive death seem strong, this view may be mistaken. It is not the aim of this book to try to persuade its readers that survival is a fact but rather to invite them to keep an open mind on the subject. Perhaps the best reason for keeping an open mind is that there does seem to be a good deal of evidence that personalities do survive bodily death however this evidence is to be explained. In the situation of such a conflict between reasonable expectations and apparent evidence, one can only wait and see.

The investigation of the evidence with respect to survival is one of the enterprises with which psychical research (now commonly called 'parapsychology') is concerned. It is not the only one although perhaps the most important. If the enterprise has not yet led to a conclusive answer, this does not mean that it has not been worthwhile. Science is the investigation by observation or experiment of questions to which we do not yet know the answers, and psychical research is in this sense a branch

of science. If we ask whether these methods will ever give us a scientific answer to the question of whether we survive death, one can only guess the answer. My own guess would be that, by pursuing the methods of psychical research, we shall, at any rate, find out more about the matter and be justified in holding whatever beliefs we have about the matter (whether for or against) with more conviction than we can have now. If it should be the case that further investigation increases the grounds for believing in the reality of survival, the history of scientific research seems to hold out little hope that it will ever bring us to full knowledge on the subject. A more reasonable hope would be that, as research solves the first problems about it, further problems will turn up. We shall not then, at any time in the foreseeable future, feel that we know all about survival and its conditions. For various reasons, the early members of the Society for Psychical Research regarded the question of whether we survive death as one of the principal problems to which they had to find a solution. For example, the massive volume by F. W. H. Myers, published after his death, bore a title reflecting this interest (Myers, 1903). It was called *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*. The essential feature of the method adopted by this book was that of making an analysis of human personality from stories culled from the psychological literature and deducing from this analysis whether or not it was of a nature to survive death. This method has not, I think, proved a fruitful one. It has not itself led to any firmly based conclusions or led to further fruitful work along these or similar lines. On the other hand, the investigation by the early psychical researchers into the ostensible communicators who came through mediums has led to much further work, although perhaps to less definitive results than Myers and his contemporaries would have hoped. Interest in the study of such communications has tended to decline somewhat among modern parapsychologists, while new methods of enquiry into the survival question have been developed.

The enterprise of studying the evidence for survival is obviously not one that can receive much sympathy from those whose minds are already made up that any survival of death is impossible. There are others to whom it may appear that the enterprise is not worthwhile for a different reason. These are the people who are already convinced that their conscious life does go on after death and who do not feel that they want any reassurance about it. They might, for example, be convinced of it on religious grounds; they may hold a system of religious beliefs that includes the belief that conscious life goes on after bodily death. "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" is, for example, a statement of a religious belief that obviously implies acceptance of survival as a fact.

For such religious believers, the aim of having communication with those who have died should not appear to be impossible although they

may have other reasons for not trying to have such communication. They might regard it as superfluous or perhaps as a wrong kind of behaviour. They might feel that no reassurance was necessary on a matter so well attested by the Scriptures, and they might feel that any attempt to make sure by communicating with the departed was an act of rebellion against the limitations on human activity which have been imposed by God.

It would have been reasonable at one time to have supposed that Christian religious writers would have been amongst those who took immortality for granted. This is no longer the case; the modern advanced theologian may hold this doctrine very lightly or reject it altogether. For example, Don Cupitt (Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge) in a recent book has stated that it is spiritually important that one should not believe in life after death (Cupitt, 1980). This author states dogmatically that there is no chance of even a temporary survival after bodily death. This opinion is not, however, based upon any consideration of the parapsychological evidence but on a dubious philosophical argument. The parapsychological evidence seems to be here rejected for the same reason as it is by the average religious unbeliever, because it seems so obvious that the answer to any question of survival must be in the negative that further enquiry is not necessary.

So, for different reasons, people of various shades of opinion, both believers and unbelievers, may not be interested in its general problems or the particular problem of whether any evidence for it can be obtained by getting in touch with the departed. There remain, however, a considerable number of people whose minds are not so firmly made up that attempts to find out more do not seem worthwhile. This group of possible enquirers includes, no doubt, some religious believers and some whose scientific outlook predisposes them against belief in survival. Even those who are inclined to accept or to reject survival on religious or common sense grounds may feel that they would like to get more evidence about it. This need not be because they feel that such evidence is necessary for the support of their convictions but because they feel that knowledge about the reality or unreality of the survival of death is a necessary part of a complete understanding of how things are. Science is our ever-widening system of knowledge of how things are. If there is a conscious life after death, a science which omits or ignores this fact is an incomplete science. It is for the sake of a complete science, not for the sake of a religious, or any other, faith that the open-minded enquirer is driven to do what he can to find out about this matter. The first step that must often be taken is to get rid of previously held opinions on the matter and to acquire an open mind about it. Not, of course, in the expectation that one's mind must remain permanently open, but in the hope that such an approach to the evidence will give one grounds for a soundly based opinion on the matter.

II. WISHES AND EVIDENCE

It is sometimes suggested that it is only our wishes that make us inclined to believe in our survival of bodily death; our wish to go on living makes us blind to the plain fact that our stream of consciousness must be extinguished when our brains are destroyed at death. That our wishes may be strongly concerned in this matter is obvious, and this should make us somewhat distrustful of our conclusions on the subject. At the same time, our emotional involvement is not necessarily in the direction of making us want to survive. In the teachings of the Buddha, as recorded in the Theravada Scriptures, it is taken for granted that there is survival of death in the form of repeated reincarnations, but this is regarded as a most undesirable fate which it is the aim of the Buddhist to avoid by devout meditation and the destruction of craving. In the Middle Ages in Christian England, it seems to have been generally believed that the most probable fate for any of us after death was never-ending torment in Hell. If wishes had determined men's beliefs at that time, surely they would have believed in the extinction of consciousness at death, yet belief in the survival of conscious life was stronger then than it is now. Belief in the everlasting torments of Hell has now declined, and those who believe in a life after death feel also free to believe that this life will be such as they will enjoy. Yet not all do desire everlasting life. I remember having heard the well-known philosopher and psychical researcher Professor Broad say that he hoped for the extinction of his conscious life when he died, but he feared that the findings of psychical research made it seem unlikely that this hope would be fulfilled. Broad's conclusion about psychical research was that this had indicated that the world was more complicated than Victorian science had supposed, "more complicated and much nastier". It would be interesting to know what Broad thinks about this now that he has passed through the gateway of bodily death.

The question of whether we want a life after our death is not one, I think, which we should take too seriously. The important question is "What is the case?", and this can be answered only by looking at the facts and not by examining our wishes. Our wishes are important only as one of the factors that may make us distrust our judgment on the matter.

As to what facts we should look at in order to find out more about this matter, there are several. One, at least, has been available for a long time; others have only recently been considered. The earliest method was that of seeking communication with the departed through the agency of a medium who is a person, either male or female, who seems to have special gifts in such communication. Other avenues more recently explored are those of the evidence which seems to point to reincarnation, studies of the experiences of the dying, and investigation of the states of consciousness

which seem to suggest that mental activity may go on independently of the physical body—'out-of-the-body experiences', or OBEs.

The way of enquiring as to the facts of survival by obtaining what appear to be communications from the departed has a long history. One of the earliest records with which most people will be familiar is that of King Saul going to the witch (or medium) of Endor with the intention of establishing communication with the spirit of the prophet Samuel who had then died (I Samuel, Chap. 28).

Although ways of establishing apparent communication with the departed have been practised for a long time, they did not become generally known in our culture until about the middle of the last century. Then the family of a farmer called Fox, living in a small town in the state of New York, started receiving what they believed to be messages from a pedlar who had been murdered at their house before they themselves lived there. Their two young daughters, Margaret and Kate (aged 14 and 11 respectively), seemed to be the agents of this communication and both afterwards became professional mediums. So also did many other people; the movement spread widely in America and also in Europe, becoming organised in the religion of Spiritualism. The means of communication in the Fox case was by the noise of raps which, by an agreed code, answered questions asked by the family. The means of communication now used differ with different mediums. Sometimes the medium goes into a state of trance somewhat resembling sleep and delivers messages in speech or writing from the spirits. Sometimes these messages have the appearance of being spoken directly by the communicating spirits; sometimes they appear to be transmitted by another spirit personality called the 'control'. Similar communications, in speech or writing, are produced by some mediums who show no signs of being in a state of trance.

Some mediums go further than this and, in a semi-darkened room, lighted perhaps by a dim red light, show spirit forms coming out from the curtained alcove in which the medium is sitting. There seems to be insufficient ground for supposing that such physical phenomena are always fraudulent, but there is sufficient fraud in them to make one suspicious of them. Particularly is this suspicion reasonable if they are shown at séances for which a considerable fee is charged; genuine paranormal phenomena are inclined not to occur so predictably as is needed for the purposes of public display.

If anyone wants to know more about the evidence for survival, it is well that he should attend a certain number of mediumistic séances. He may perhaps get advice from a spiritualist friend or a spiritualist organisation as to a reliable medium. It may well be that he will get no convincing evidence himself, but he is fairly certain to get messages ostensibly from his deceased friends and relatives, although he may remain doubtful as to whether these messages really come from the next world or whether they

are fabrications (conscious or unconscious) of the medium or of himself. For making a judgment as to whether any such communications do come from the next world, he may rely more on the best cases reported in the literature than on his own limited experience. He will, however, be in a better position for making a judgment on the cases reported in the literature if he has had some experience of mediumistic séances himself.

Certainly there may be many people who feel that they do not need to study the literature to find out the evidence for the survival of those who have passed through bodily death. They feel that, in séances or through striking personal experiences, they are convinced of the reality of their own communication with the departed. Their conviction may be justified, but their experiences are their own and may not convey conviction to other people who have not shared them. For the rest of us, a reasonable judgment must be made from the written records of reliable witnesses, and these records must be subjected to critical examination to see how strongly they point to real communication from the next world or whether they have another, more commonplace, explanation. For such critical examination, attendance at some séances may be a useful preparation although, for most of us, it may not itself provide convincing evidence.

There is more than one way in which sitters at a mediumistic séance can become convinced that the apparent communicators are really the individuals from the next world that they claim to be. The problem for the this-world sitter is much the same as it would be if he had been rung up on the telephone and was uncertain of the identity of the person ringing up, whether he was the person he claimed to be or someone else impersonating him. The speaker might be identifiable by his voice or by characteristic turns of speech. This may be called 'identification by recognition'. He might, on the other hand, show who he was by producing some piece of information which could be assumed to be known only to the person claiming to be telephoning and not to anyone else who might be impersonating him.

For evidence of the identity of the alleged communicators in a mediumistic séance, the same kinds of criteria can be used. Sometimes, particularly when the medium is apparently speaking with the voice of the communicator (in 'direct voice' communications), the sitters may say that they recognise the voice of the communicator or his way of talking. There is no doubt that such experience of recognition of a personality may be very convincing to the person to whom it occurs; it cannot be very striking evidence to anyone else.

If we want to judge the evidential value of the mediumistic sittings of other people, we must rely mostly on identification by information. Much of the information received is not of much use for this purpose. "Your grandfather sends his love to you and hopes your cold is better" may be a

true message and of some emotional value to the person receiving it, but it contains no proof of its reality. Not much better for this purpose would be "He is an old man with a white beard; he died after a long illness". Such a piece of information would be accepted as true by too many people to be of any use as a criterion for identification.

A stronger ground for feeling conviction of the identity of the one communicating would be the description of some incident which had been common to him and to one or more of the sitters, or the reproduction of some past conversation between them. There are frequent examples in the literature of psychical research of such references to shared experiences being produced through a medium. These seem, at first sight, to be very strong evidence as to the identity of the communicator, but they do not always stand up well to critical explanation. A possible alternative explanation was provided by the early research finding of the reality of thought-transference (or telepathy) in which a piece of knowledge in one person's mind seemed to be transmitted to another mind without the use of the ordinary physical means of communication. If this was admitted as a possibility, it clearly threw doubt on the kind of evidence that depended on the receiving of true information on matters known only to the ostensible communicator. This might not be due to the agency of any discarnate mind but only to telepathy from sitters to medium.

This possibility of telepathy to the medium giving spurious evidence suggesting the transmission of information from a deceased communicator was recognised early in the study of evidence for survival, and the production of a shared experience was only regarded as first class evidence if no one at the séance knew about the fact communicated. Still better were the rare cases when the fact communicated was not known to any living person at the time of communication but was found afterwards to have been correctly reported.

A good example of an incident of this kind is to be found in Sir Oliver Lodge's account of communications received ostensibly from his son Raymond who was killed in the First World War (Lodge, 1922). At a sitting with a medium on 3 December 1915, nearly three months after Raymond's death, a message was received about a group photograph including Raymond which none of the Lodge family had yet seen. One detail of the photograph that had been mentioned was that somebody wanted to lean on him, but he is not sure if the photograph was taken with someone leaning on him. When the photograph was delivered to Lodge's house four days later, it was seen that one of the officers standing behind Raymond had a hand resting on Raymond's shoulder. This is a fairly good example of what was at that time regarded as first class evidence of communication from beyond the grave. It might have been more impressive perhaps if the communication had indicated more clearly that the fact of the leaning was recorded in the photograph, but

certainly the hand on the shoulder could not have been supplied by telepathy from any of the people present at the sitting, since it was known to none of them.

This is only one of many cases in which the fact communicated could not have come from any of the people present. Since this was accepted as the best kind of evidence for real communication from the next world, precautions were taken to ensure that no one present at the sitting shared memories with the person it was hoped to communicate with. This could be ensured, for example, by arranging a sitting at which the person present was not a friend or relative of the ostensible communicator but someone who was acting as a proxy for that friend or relative. Such proxy sittings also proved to be effective in getting into apparent communication with the desired communicator from beyond the grave and in getting identifying information from him.

It remains a question worth asking whether a particular piece of identifying information could have come into the medium's mind as a result of telepathy from one of the sitters present, but it is by no means as important a question as it seemed when Sir Oliver Lodge was writing, since it is now known that telepathy from the people present is not the only way in which an item of knowledge could be conveyed into the medium's mind paranormally, that is, without the use of ordinary sensory perception. In March 1934, a little under twenty years after the publication of *Raymond*, J. B. Rhine published the results of a set of experiments which showed clearly that the presence of an item of knowledge in someone else's mind was not a necessary condition for its paranormal transmission. Telepathy, therefore, was not the only kind of paranormal transmission of knowledge against which the investigator of mediumistic phenomena had to be on his guard (Rhine, 1934). What Rhine had found was that subjects could succeed in card-guessing experiments not only when the experimenter knew which card had been turned up (explained by telepathy) but also when the right answer was known to nobody at the time of guessing, and even when it was not knowable at that time since the guess was made before the card had been turned up.

These last two kinds of paranormal knowing had already been described before Rhine's time and were commonly referred to as 'clairvoyance' and 'precognition', respectively. They were not, however, generally regarded as serious alternatives to telepathy as possible explanations of mediumistic phenomena until after that date. The transmission of thoughts from one mind to another seemed to many psychical researchers a more likely explanation than any paranormal process involving no other mind. But this is a field in which our judgments of what seems likely are not reliable guides to what is the case, and Rhine had shown that the evidence for clairvoyance and precognition was at least as good as that for telepathy. This finding led him to make a change

in the way of talking about the possibilities of paranormal knowledge, and he introduced the term 'extra-sensory perception' (commonly shortened to ESP) to cover what had previously been called 'telepathy', 'clairvoyance' and 'precognition'. Some people have used for this purpose the term 'Psi' which was originally suggested by Wiesner and myself (Thouless, 1942).

Whatever we may 'call it, this extended possibility of paranormal knowing, which includes telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition, undoubtedly complicates the problem of assessing the evidential value of information received apparently from the next world. If the information about the officer leaning on Raymond was due to the ESP of the medium, it obviously did not come from telepathy from one of the sitters since it was a fact known to none of them. It might have come, however, from the medium's clairvoyant knowledge of the photograph before it had arrived at Sir Oliver Lodge's house or even from her precognitive knowledge of what would be seen on the photograph when it turned up.

It may be objected that these are very improbable lines of explanation, since they assume that the medium has an ESP capacity far greater than has ever been demonstrated in laboratory experiments on ESP. That the medium has picked up by telepathy some information known to one of the sitters seems a far more likely line of explanation than that her ESP has ranged through the world to pick up information about a particular photograph not yet connected with the series of sittings.

The force of this objection must be admitted. That the medium possesses such extended powers of ESP is unlikely but not impossible. We cannot say that such a method of getting information by the medium's ESP is an impossible line of explanation for the reception of a piece of information which appears to come from the departed. At best, we may hope to be able to convince ourselves that, for a particular piece of information received, it is an improbable one. This, of course, cannot give us certainty that the communication came from beyond the grave, but perhaps certainty is not what we should be looking for in this field. Perhaps we ought to be content with asking ourselves what is the most likely explanation indicated by the evidence and whether the reception of some, at least, of the information received at mediumistic séances is with a high degree of probability really coming from the deceased communicator.

If this is agreed, it would seem that we should also be looking for ways of getting such evidence as would discriminate between what might come through ESP and what seems to require a real communicator from beyond the grave. I shall be describing later an experiment that I have devised in which I have tried to make this discrimination (Thouless, 1948). This experiment is not yet completed but if it is successful, I think it will much increase the likelihood of the information coming from a surviving communicator.

Before considering what new methods of investigation may be made in the future, we must satisfy ourselves as to the present state of the evidence. It has already been suggested that most people will not get a satisfactory answer to this question from their own experience of mediumistic séances. They will be well advised to go to a certain number of séances in order to appreciate what they afterwards read about them, but their main source of evidence will come from what they read about other people's experiences in attempts to communicate with the departed. The student might well start his journeys into the literature by reading Sir Oliver Lodge's book about Raymond already referred to. This is an objective record. Although the author had strong convictions on the subject himself, he did not allow these convictions to disturb his critical judgment. The reader may not come away from the reading of this book with any strong conviction that it has proved or even shown the high probability of real communication with the surviving consciousness of Raymond Lodge, but he will get a good idea of how such communication is attempted, and he should gain some insight into the difficulties of these attempts. If the reader remains doubtful as to whether these sittings with Raymond did really show that his stream of consciousness had survived, I do not think that Sir Oliver himself would have had any quarrel with this uncertainty. He himself was a convinced Spiritualist but he had become so before the death of Raymond. Certainly he did believe that, in these sittings, he was in touch with the surviving consciousness of Raymond, but he does not seem to have thought that the weight of evidence in favour of spirit communications was much increased by the case of Raymond.

I think that Sir Oliver Lodge himself would have advised the student that the case of Raymond could only be the beginning of a search for the evidence as to the reality of spirit communications. One must go on from there to a study of the most convincing reports in the literature, that is, the reports which offer the strongest evidence for the reality of spirit communicators and are most difficult to explain by other principles of explanation, such as ESP. At this point, the enquiring student is likely to ask which are the most strongly evidential of the many thousands of published cases. Probably no two psychical researchers would give quite the same answer to this question, and I do not feel that I know the literature of psychical research well enough to give a very adequate answer to it. I will only mention some of the cases that I have read which seemed to me to point most strongly to communication from a surviving consciousness beyond the grave.

The question that concerns us at this stage is not, I suggest, that of the survival of the consciousness of those whose bodies have died, but the preliminary question of the reality of the communications which appear to come from them. These two questions are related but not the same; it is clear that if communications really come from those whose bodies have

died, something of them must have survived, but the unreality of the alleged communications would not imply that nothing had survived. There are possible modes of survival (such as that of consciousness going on in a timeless state) which would imply the impossibility of communication between the living and the departed. Such communication could only take place in a time common to the communicator and the sitters. If the communicator's existence were timeless, there could be no such common time and, therefore, no communication. So communication through a medium from the dead to the living, if it were proved to be real, would not only be evidence for the going on of the communicator's consciousness; it would also be evidence against his survival being timeless. The reality of spirit communications through mediums is thus not simply a question of survival or non-survival; it also bears on the further question of what sort of survival seems to be indicated.

Those who want to gain a good understanding of what goes on in a mediumistic séance and to appreciate the difficulties of interpreting its evidence would also be well advised to study the scripts ostensibly from the deceased medium known to psychical researchers as Mrs. Willett, and to the rest of the world as Mrs. Coombe Tennant, a magistrate not generally known to have any connection with things psychic (Cummins, 1965). One of the interesting points of this book is that the apparent communicator was herself a medium, so her remarks on the problems of mediumship should be seriously considered. She expressed a preference for the word 'interpreter' rather than 'medium' because of their frequent misinterpretation of what the communicator is trying to transmit. "They catch perhaps what the communicator emphasises and then fill in their own subconscious material" (Cummins, 1965, p. 36). If this is indeed a communication from Mrs. Willett, it justifies a good deal of scepticism as to the details of what is communicated in a séance however convincing we may find the evidence that there is a real communicator.

As to the question of the contribution made by these scripts to the evidence for the real communicator, there is a good deal of information correctly conveyed; the scripts themselves must be read for a judgment to be made as to how convincing this is. There is also a strong impression of a definite personality emerging from the scripts. This is an argument for the reality of the communicator rather like that of identification by recognition. The reader cannot, however, recognise Mrs. Tennant since he did not know her in life; he can only be made to feel that she is such a definite personality that he would know her if he met her. This impression can, however, be created by a skilled dramatist and the medium, Geraldine Cummins, did write plays. However, the husband of the Editor, Francis Hackett, himself a biographer, was convinced by these scripts: "I've read Geraldine's fiction", he said, "She could not possibly have invented Mrs. Willett" (Cummins, 1965, p. lxi).

This obviously is not a convincing proof of the reality of Mrs. Willett as communicator in these séances. If, however, we agree to give up the search for convincing proofs in this field and to look only for indications as to the directions in which explanations lie, I think we must admit that the dramatic quality of Mrs. Willett's personality, as it emerges from these scripts, is a strong part of the case for her reality as communicator. Even those who are not convinced may well find their unbelief a little shaken by this book.

There are, of course, many other records of séances which the student of the subject will also want to read in order to form a judgment as to the strength of the evidence. I will mention one more which I think deserves a high place in the literature of the subject. This is the case of A. J. Balfour, the conservative prime minister of the early twentieth century, and the lady he loved, Mary Lyttleton who died on Palm Sunday in 1875. This is generally known as the 'Palm Sunday' case. It is referred to in the book already quoted (*Swan on a Black Sea*), but for a fuller account of it one must consult the report made by the Countess of Balfour in the *Proceedings of the SPR* (J. Balfour, 1960). A number of mediums were concerned in these scripts, including the Mrs. Willett who was the ostensible communicator in *Swan on a Black Sea*.

A careful perusal of this case will give a good idea of the strength of the evidence for real communication from the departed and of the complexity and difficulty of its interpretation. In its rough outline, it was an apparent attempt of Mary Lyttleton to communicate with Lord Balfour from whom she had been parted by death nearly forty years before. A. J. Balfour was sceptical about the source of these messages when they first started arriving through Mrs. Willett in 1912 (p. 121), but apparently he accepted them as messages from his departed lover before his own death in 1930. I think that this case too would not be claimed by any psychical researcher, whatever his personal convictions on the survival question, as convincing proof of the reality of communication with the departed. It does, however, add its own contribution to the total weight of evidence on the subject, and the report deserves careful consideration by anyone studying the evidence.

III. DOUBTS ABOUT COMMUNICATORS

There are, however, other records of alleged communications from departed spirits which raise doubts as to the reality of the communicators and as to whether, if real, they are the people they claim to be. A good example of the grounds for such doubts is to be found in alleged communications, obtained through Hester Dowden, a medium of high intelligence and undoubted integrity, dealing with the controversial question about the authorship of the plays and sonnets commonly

attributed to William Shakespeare. Various writers have, during the last two centuries, suggested that the real author was Francis Bacon, the learned Lord Chancellor of James I's reign. A supporter of the Baconian theory, Mr. Alfred Dodd, had a sitting with Mrs. Dowden in which he got in touch with what claimed to be the spirit of Francis Bacon, who confirmed the sitter's opinion that he (Francis Bacon) was the real author of the plays and poems published under the name of William Shakespeare (Dodd, 1940).

A few years later, another writer with somewhat different views on the authorship of plays attributed to 'Shakespeare' had a sitting with Mrs. Dowden on the same topic (Allen, 1947). Mr. Percy Allen agreed with Mr. Dodd that the real author of the plays and sonnets attributed to Shakespeare was not William Shakespeare himself, but he differed from Dodd in thinking that the real author was not Bacon but Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. He got in touch with various Elizabethan communicators claiming to be the same persons as Dodd was in touch with, but they now told a different story about the authorship and confirmed the sitter's opinion that the real author of the plays and the sonnets was the Earl of Oxford, although they also said that Shakespeare himself played an important though minor part in preparing the plays for the stage and that Bacon was the chairman of a committee which organised the writing. Oxford furthered his claim to be author of the sonnets by producing three more sonnets which seemed to the sitter to have the true 'Shakespearean' quality. Francis Bacon was naturally challenged to say why he had claimed the authorship of plays and poems in the Dodd sittings. Bacon explained that the Dodd interviews were not with him but with a deputy who had never been in touch with him, and who mistakenly supposed that he had written the plays and sonnets.

This, of course, may have been the case, but if one admits the possibility of an alleged communicator being a deputy who does not know the facts about which he is communicating, one must also admit that this may be the explanation of other communications. Why, for example, should not Mr. Allen's alleged communicators also be impersonators of the people they claim to be? May not the ostensible Oxford be a deputy with false information about Oxford's part in the production of the plays and sonnets? Mr. Allen's opinion as to Oxford's authorship was already formed before the sittings began. Allen mentions (p. 214) that almost every conclusion that he had drawn from his examination of the sonnets, made before these sittings commenced, was amply confirmed by the Elizabethans he interviewed. To the sceptical reader, this may not appear to be ground for confidence in the reality of the communicators; it may rather suggest that their information reflected the opinions of the sitter. We may have rather more confidence in those points where the expectations of the sitter were contradicted by the communicators, as, for

example, in the large part played by Shakespeare himself in the construction of the plays. Even this is not very strong evidence of the reality of the communicators; we shall see later that a purely imaginary communicator may contradict the expectations of those who imagined him.

An important experiment throwing light on the nature of communicators was performed by a group in Toronto. This experiment was first reported as an article in the Toronto journal *New Horizons* but more fully described later in the book *Conjuring Up Philip* (Owen and Sparrow, 1974, 1976). This experimental group had the ingenious idea of building up an imaginary communicator. The communicator was called 'Philip' and was supposed to have been a Cavalier living in England under Oliver Cromwell. He had a beautiful but cold wife who was jealous of a gypsy woman called 'Margo'. She accused Margo of witchcraft for which Margo was condemned and burnt. For this, Philip blamed himself and eventually committed suicide. This was a story invented by the group; there was no reason for supposing that it corresponded to any historical reality. The original intention of the group was to create an artificial apparition; it was hoped that Philip would be seen as a ghost is seen. This object was not achieved, although paranormal physical phenomena, such as table movements and rappings, accompanied the group activity of creating the imaginary communicator. By means of these physical phenomena, communication could be established with Philip as it can with the ostensible communicator in any séance. By use of the raps, one for 'yes' and two for 'no', Philip could answer questions and generally made answers consistent with the story that had been devised, giving an added appearance of reality to the personality of Philip. It is interesting, however, to notice that he sometimes gave answers that contradicted the agreed story. Twice, for example, he denied that he was in love with Margo which was an essential element in the story. From this we may deduce that contradiction of the expectations of the sitters does not show that the communicator is a reality independent of the sitters. The figures of our night dreams also may show such independence of our expectations.

If, however, Philip was merely a fictitious construction by the minds of the sitting group, this obviously throws some doubt on the independent reality of other apparent communicators. For example, one must consider the possibility that the communicators who discussed the authorship of the plays and poetry commonly attributed to William Shakespeare may have been thought-forms created by the sitters and the medium. Even without the example of Philip, this might have been suspected from their general agreement with the expectations of the sitter. Occasional exceptions to this general agreement, as on the part played by Shakespeare himself in the preparation of the plays, do not altogether remove this suspicion; Philip also might contradict elements in the story provided for

him, although he was certainly a thought-form created by the group. It looks as if thought-forms, once created, may show some signs of leading a relatively independent mental life.

One may accept fairly easily the possibility that the Elizabethans of Percy Allen may have been thought-forms and not wholly independent personalities. It is perhaps harder to accept the possibility that so also may have been Raymond Lodge and Mary Lyttleton of the Palm Sunday case and even the Mrs. Tennant of *Swan on a Black Sea*, but this is a possibility that must be considered in these cases too. Certainly there is nothing in the Philip series of experiments which compels us to adopt the 'thought-form' explanation for all ostensible communicators, but it does offer an alternative to the acceptance of them as spirits of people who have once lived on Earth. We may still adopt this 'spiritist' explanation for at least some communicators, but it must be on evidence that rules out the possibility of explaining them as phenomena of the 'Philip' type.

What kind of evidence could rule out the possibility of a particular communicator being an imagined thought-form of the Philip type? Not, I think, its dramatic convincingness as a complete and well-rounded personality. Philip seems to have had the appearance of being such a complete and well-rounded personality. We cannot accept the argument of Francis Hackett for the reality of Mrs Willett, that she could not have been invented by Geraldine Cummins. She might have possessed a quality of dramatic reality beyond Geraldine Cummins's conscious power of dramatic inventiveness but within the limits of her subconscious dramatising powers. We cannot tell what these limits are. Any one of us who makes a study of his or her dreams at night knows that, in constructing the personalities of these dreams, we go far beyond the powers of dramatic invention that we can consciously exercise in our waking moments. So also we might find a greatly enhanced dramatic inventiveness if we were in a group concerned to call up a communicator from another world.

If we cannot rely on the judgement that an apparent communicator seems to be too real to be a product of the medium's or sitters' imagination, by what criterion can we decide whether an apparent communicator is the discarnate spirit of a once living personality or merely a phenomenon of the Philip type? I think we still have such a possible criterion in the conveying of information known only to the supposed communicator if the information is of such a kind that its knowledge cannot reasonably be attributed to ESP by the medium or sitters. If it is considered that we have as yet no convincing example of such a piece of information having been conveyed by a communicator, this situation must be regarded as a challenge to parapsychologists to try to produce one experimentally. The 'cipher' test which I shall be describing later and Stevenson's 'lock' test are both attempts to provide an experimental situation that would make this discrimination. If a

communicator could provide the correct key in either of these cases, it would be a strong indication that he really was the surviving spirit of the person who made the cipher or who set the lock and not a mere product of the subconscious invention of any group; the 'Philip' type of explanation would be ruled out. So far, there has been no successful completion of either of these tests; we must wait and see whether there will be one in the future.

The question at issue is not the reality of the alleged communicators but whether they are really the spirits of people whose bodies have died. Phenomena of the 'Philip' type may have a considerable degree of reality. Indeed, the fact that physical paranormal effects occur in their presence suggests that they have. But their reality is not that of spirits of the departed. If they are in some sense real but not really spirits of the departed, they obviously cannot form any basis for a theory of survival.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL TESTS OF COMMUNICATORS

The investigation of Philip is one example of an experimental attack on the problem of survival. It is experimental in the sense that its investigators were not content to observe events that occurred spontaneously but intervened actively to produce the events they wanted to study. Experiment is a very effective tool in scientific investigation. This is not the only example of its use in the study of the survival problem. We may also notice the praiseworthy but unsuccessful experiment carried out in the thirties by Whately Carington (Carington, 1934, 1935, 1937). The idea behind this experiment was to see whether communicators could be identified by their performance in a mental test. If, for example, any one ostensible communicator, say Sir Francis Bacon, gave the same responses to a test when coming through one medium as when coming through another medium, this could be taken as evidence that we were really dealing with the same communicator.

Whately Carington was, at first, inclined to claim that his results did prove the self-identity of his communicators, but his criteria of identity and difference depended on the use of a kind of mathematical reasoning which he did not well understand. I was asked by the Society for Psychical Research to make a report on this work, and I found regretfully that Whately Carington had been too optimistic in the interpretation of his figures; his results for the same communicator did not really resemble each other more than the results for different communicators, so there was no real evidence that communications coming through different mediums might be from the same communicators (Thouless, 1937). This negative conclusion seems inescapable; it was accepted by Whately Carington himself in a note at the end of my 1937 paper. The progress of science can be regarded as one of trial and error in which the errors

play their own important part in the advance towards understanding.

If the conclusions first advanced by Whately Carington were erroneous, his experimental method remains open for a future explorer. One may still ask whether there can be found any measurable characteristic by which a particular communicator may be identified even when he comes through different mediums. This possibility does not seem to have been explored since the death of Whately Carington. It would probably be difficult and might lead to no useful result. If anyone does try to explore it, I should suggest that test results are too unreliable to be likely to be of much use as the identifying criteria.

If Whately Carington's quest had been successful, it would have indicated the autonomy of the communicators. This would not have proved their identity; they might not have been the personalities they claimed to be. Whately Carington had also the idea of an experiment designed to answer this question also. In an article on 'survival' in *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, Carington 1967, he suggested doing psychological tests on living individuals and comparing the results obtained with the results given after their death by communicators who claimed to be the same individuals. (Gertrude Schmeidler (1978) proposed a similar experiment.) So far as I know, Carington never carried out this experiment. It would obviously have the same difficulties arising from the unreliability of use of test results as criteria for the identification of the communicators.

Another experimental approach to the problem of the reality of communication with the departed is to be found in what are called 'cross-correspondences' which started soon after the beginning of the twentieth century. What this evidence looks like is an attempt devised by the communicators themselves to convince sitters as to their reality. The essential point of the new sort of evidence was that its force depended on the combination of communications through different mediums. Messages might come from various sources which, taken separately, made no sense but which communicated something when put together. It was as if one medium produced one bit of a jigsaw puzzle while another produced (apparently from the same communicator) an exactly fitting bit of the same puzzle and the two together made a recognisable part of a picture.

This type of evidence began to be found in scripts about 1902 (Saltmarsh, 1938). Several of the leading figures in psychical research had died a little before this time: H. Sidgwick in 1900, F. W. H. Myers in 1901, and E. Gurney in 1888. So the time of the appearance of the cross-correspondences is not inconsistent with the possibility that the new evidence was an experiment devised by these and other recently deceased psychical researchers in order to provide evidence for their activity as communicators that could not be explained as due to telepathy on the part of the medium or sitters or as due to unconscious dramatisation by them.

The explanation by telepathy was felt to be excluded by the difficulty of supposing that one medium could know telepathically what was being communicated through another medium, not perhaps personally known to her. It seemed simpler to suppose that the common mind that knew both messages was that of the communicator who was ostensibly the source of both. That seems reasonable, and it must be agreed that explanation of cross-correspondences by ESP is difficult, but at the same time it must be recognised that all arguments from the limitation of the possibilities of ESP are somewhat dubious. We do not know enough about the limits of ESP to say with confidence that one medium could not know by ESP what another medium, perhaps in a different part of the world, was writing. It seems unlikely, so we must agree that the cross-correspondences offer a strong additional indication of the reality and autonomy of communicators, but it is by no means an overwhelming one.

The key to the understanding of the cross-correspondences often lies in references to matters familiar to classical scholars and not to the rest of us. This seems to point to their origin in a group of classical scholars who passed over about the time of their first appearance. This group includes Myers, A. W. Verrall, and S. H. Butcher, all of whom were amongst the ostensible communicators at this time and who were all classical scholars. This use of classical knowledge to provide the key to the cross-correspondences makes it difficult for most of us to assess the strength of the evidence they provide. It has also been claimed to rule out the possibility of the medium or sitters providing the cross-correspondence relationships from their own knowledge. The strength of this argument may easily be overestimated. If detailed classical knowledge is not wide-spread, there are easy roads to particular bits of classical knowledge. There was, for example, a small volume called Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, first published in the eighteenth century with revised editions in 1838 and 1860. This seems to have been a fairly popular book in Victorian times and may have been on many book shelves. Who can say that neither medium nor sitters had read the article on Dionysius in Lemprière and remembered enough of it to produce the information about the Ear of Dionysius found in one of the most often quoted cross-correspondences (Balfour, 1917)?

If the cross-correspondences were an experiment arranged from the next world, I do not think it was a particularly good one. There is still, eighty years later, controversy as to the reality and evidential value of cross-correspondences; a good experiment should give a more clear-cut result than that. I think that anyone who reads a case alleged to contain cross-correspondences can guess why controversy about them still persists. The relationship between the related passages does not stand out clearly. The scripts have to be carefully studied and then there remains doubt as to whether apparent correspondences are accidental or the result of a

design. If they are the result of a design, I think they contribute evidence of the operation of autonomous personalities; they could not well have been produced by thought forms of the Philip type. They must be counted as part of the evidence pointing to communication from real autonomous discarnate personalities but not, I think, as very strong evidence.

V. THE 'SEALED PACKAGE' AND RELATED TESTS

Another type of experimental enquiry into the problem of survival was started by F. W. H. Myers during his earthly life (Salter, 1958). This was the 'sealed package' test. This was a form of evidence by information in which the identifying item of information is selected by the intending communicator during his lifetime instead of occurring haphazardly during a séance. What is to be communicated is written down by the intending communicator and sealed in a package which is then deposited with some person or body interested in the experiment. The intending communicator does not, of course, tell anyone else what the message he had written down is. This is sealed and not opened until after the intending communicator's death. Before it is opened, attempts are made to get in touch with the communicator through a medium to find out what the sealed message is. If he were to report it correctly, this would be taken as strong evidence that the ostensible communicator was really the stream of consciousness of the writer of the message.

The idea behind this experiment, that of deciding on the piece of information to be communicated before the communicator's bodily death, is a good one although the details of the 'sealed package' experiment carried out by Myers and many years later by Sir Oliver Lodge are open to criticism. Neither experiment was, in fact, successful. Repeated efforts were made to get through mediums a message from the experimenter as to what was in his package but neither succeeded. Myers had put in a reference to the garden of the house in which his lady love had lived, but the interviewing committee had concluded that the package had contained a reference to Plato's *Symposium*. It is true that these two ideas had some connection with each other since both are concerned with love, but the test remains a failure since its result does not demonstrate unambiguously that the communicator knew what was the original message in the package. It suggests indeed that whatever was communicating did not know this because, if he had known, he could have given the message directly instead of merely making an indirect allusion to it.

The Myers sealed package test took place too early for me, but I was concerned with a later test of the same kind arranged by Sir Oliver Lodge some ten years before his death in 1940 (Gay *et alii*, 1955). He deposited

two packages with identical contents, one with the Society of Psychical Research and the other with the London Spiritualist Alliance. Both contained in their innermost envelope a description of a habit that Lodge had formed of moving his fingers on tables or chairs in such a way as to reproduce the fingering of a particular five-finger piano exercise that he had practiced as a child.

The intention of the experiment was that Sir Oliver Lodge should, after his death, describe this habit so clearly and unambiguously that it was obvious that the person communicating was the same as the one who had written the original message. This he failed to do. As in the case of Myers, it has been argued that some of the things communicated in the numerous sittings with mediums had some resemblance to this intended communication, but such resemblances might well occur by chance if the communicator were not Sir Oliver Lodge, and their production was not the object of the experiment, which was to provide certain evidence of the identity of the communicator. The drawing of any conclusion from such resemblances was made more difficult by an unfortunate complication in the experiment when Sir Oliver introduced a succession of hints which he wished to have given to the communicator to jog his memory before the final envelope was opened. These hints might have served a useful purpose in jogging Lodge's memory if he was the communicator, but it was unavoidable that they may also have suggested clues to the sitters as to what was in the final envelope and so have increased the likelihood that there might be purely accidental resemblances between communications and the contents of the sealed envelope.

My own conclusion from my experience of participating in the Oliver Lodge sealed package test was that the basic idea of the test was a good one but that there were defects in the details of the test which made it of no use for the purpose for which it was designed. The problem seemed then to be the designing of a new test that would preserve the basic idea of trying to get a communicator to prove his identity by producing some information selected by himself during his lifetime on earth while avoiding the defects which became apparent in the practical use of these earlier tests. This is what I tried to do later in my 'cipher' test of survival (Thouless, 1948, 1949).

The most obvious defect of the sealed package test as used by Myers and Lodge was that, although it eliminated the possibility of a spurious result coming through telepathy from one of the sitters, since none of them knew what was in the package, it did not eliminate the possibility of a spurious result coming through the clairvoyant powers of the medium. At the beginning of the present century, it was a reasonable view widely held by psychical researchers that the only kind of ESP that one need consider as a possibility was that in which the recipient was reading information in someone else's mind—in other words, was telepathy. That

the ESP recipient might be reading directly a fact of the outside world that was not in the mind of anyone else seemed so improbable as not to be worth considering. That is, no doubt, why it was not considered when Myers designed his test.

The situation was, however, changed when Rhine published his first book reporting experiments which proved beyond doubt that the presence of a piece of knowledge in someone else's mind was not a necessary condition for its extrasensory perception by a sensitive (Rhine, 1934). It became clear from Rhine's experiments that a mere fact not previously known to anybody could also be a target for extrasensory perception. Clairvoyance is a possibility as well as telepathy and must be allowed for in any test for survival that uses the conveying of information as its criterion for identification of supposed communicators. It seemed therefore that the ideal survival test based on the sealed package was one in which the identifying information was not written down and was not, therefore, a possible target for clairvoyance.

Another defect of the sealed package test that became apparent in practice was the impossibility of repeating an unsuccessful attempt. The only way of checking whether an answer was right or wrong was to open the envelope and see what was inside it. When this had been done the test was finished; it could not be used again since the answer was known. So a single wrong answer, if checked, made the test unusable; one must not accept an answer as the final one too soon. But how were the experimenters to know when the final answer had been given? One must try to devise a form of the sealed information test in which the rightness of the information given could be checked an indefinitely large number of times without spoiling the test for future use.

In the original sealed package test as carried out by Myers and Lodge, the experimenters were naturally anxious to be sure of not opening the package too soon and so spoiling it for future attempts. The sitters were then faced with the opposite danger of deferring the opening too long and thus accumulating a large amount of recorded material some of which was likely by mere chance to show some resemblance to what was in the package. It is arguable that this is what happened in the case of Sir Oliver Lodge. It is obvious that mere resemblance of something that is communicated to what is really in the package is not satisfactory evidence of a real communicator. The ideal test of this type would be one in which the answer was unambiguously right or wrong.

It seemed to me that a better test for the identity of a communicator to replace the sealed package test was one that had the following features incorporated in its design. There should be no hidden object or writing to be a possible target for clairvoyance on the part of the medium; there should be a possibility of an indefinitely large number of checks of attempted solutions; any solution attempted should be definitely right or

wrong; and there should be no uncertainty about whether the supposed communicator was giving the correct answer.

The test that seemed to me to fulfill these requirements was one in which the communicator would prove his identity by communicating the key to a passage in cipher which he had prepared during his lifetime. This would have the advantage that nothing would be placed in a sealed package; the enciphered passage could be printed in a book or a journal. The key to the passage would not be recorded in any way so it could not be a target for the medium's ESP. It would be safely locked in the intending communicator's own stream of consciousness; if that stream of consciousness were extinguished at his bodily death, knowledge of the key would be nonexistent. A successful communicating of the key would, therefore, be a strong indication of the survival of that consciousness. The test of it being the right key would be the fact that it enabled the enciphered passage to be read. In this form, the test would have the merit of being capable of being verified any number of times; if a particular answer turned out to be wrong, this would not prevent other guesses from being tried out later. Each answer would be unmistakably right or wrong, right if it enabled the enciphered passage to be read, wrong if it did not.

Those who have read the short stories of Conan Doyle or of Edgar Allan Poe will have a general idea of what a cipher is. Essentially it is a device for sending messages in wartime that could not be read by the enemy. For this purpose, a rule is devised for replacing the letters of the message by an apparently meaningless jumble of letters. This rule may be simple or complicated; but it is only a rule that is not simple that effectively hides the message from enemy eyes. A simple rule of substitution leads to a cipher that can be too easily read. For those who are meant to read the enciphered message a key is provided which, together with the rules that have been adopted, enables the original message to be deduced. The test that I suggest is one in which the deceased person has left an enciphered passage of which he will provide the key after his death, thus providing evidence that he is really the communicator.

But can we be sure that this is beyond the possible ESP powers of the medium? The absence of any object that can be imagined to be the target for the medium's ESP may be thought to render this explanation an unlikely one. There is, however, a better safeguard against this possibility than the mere judgment of its improbability. This is to find out whether mediums can find out the key to the cipher while the intending communicator is still alive. If it is found that they can do this, the test would obviously be worthless as evidence of his continued existence after death. If, however, all such attempts were unsuccessful but the key was correctly received after the intending communicator's death, this would be strong evidence that the key was communicated by him and was not found out by the medium's ESP.

It may also be asked whether it is not possible that the medium or some other person might discover the key to the cipher by purely rational means. This would, in fact, be possible if the rule of encipherment were a very simple one, like that used by Poe in 'The Gold Bug'. It would also be possible for even a complicated form of key to be discovered by an expert if the same key had been used for enciphering a number of messages all of which were available for study. If, however, a complicated rule of encipherment is used and only one passage is enciphered by its means, the cipher is, in practice, unreadable unless one has been told the key. A cipher to be used in a postmortem test for survival should, therefore, fulfill these two conditions: a complex method of encipherment which is only used once. One can then be confident that no one can read the enciphered message unless he has been told the key and that he has been told the key by the only person who knows it, the intending communicator.

I have myself left two such passages in cipher with the intention of trying to communicate their keys after my death. The enciphered passages are to be found on p. 163 of my book *From Anecdote to Experiment in Psychical Research* (Thouless, 1972). It is to be hoped that, after I have died, a number of people will try to get in touch with me through a medium and to get from me a message giving the keys to both or to one of the enciphered messages. The keys are simple ones which I hoped would be easy to remember: references to an identifiable passage of literature in one case and two words in the other. If anyone thinks he has succeeded in receiving such a message, he should communicate the keys to the Society for Psychical Research (1, Adam and Eve Mews, London W8 6UQ). They will check whether the key proposed for each enciphered passage enable that passage to be read. The preliminary part of this experiment, in which attempts have been made by mediums to obtain the keys by ESP in my lifetime, has already been carried out without success. There is, therefore, no evidence that the task can be accomplished by ESP, so that if the keys come through after my death it will look as if my stream of consciousness is still able to convey information and that it is, therefore, still surviving.

If no such message comes through, it will not, of course, be a proof that I have not survived. The result will obviously be consistent with this possibility, but it might have other explanations. The remembering even of such a simple matter as a key reference or pair of words may be a difficult matter after one has lost the material brain which one has used for remembering during one's lifetime. If remembering is still possible, it may have become much more difficult as it does when one loses the pocket diary used for making notes of things one wants to remember in this life. If, however, all attempts to carry out this and related tests do fail, this will obviously strengthen the case for non-survival.

Obviously any such test must be tried out with a number of different

subjects before any conclusions can be drawn from it. For this purpose of multiple repetition, the cipher test itself is not very suitable. The enciphering of a passage seems to most people to be such a formidable intellectual task that they are not willing to undertake it. One needs a simpler test of the identity of a communicator which will have the good points of the cipher test (repeatability of the process of verification, etc.) while not making any excessive demand on the intending communicator in the preparation of the test. Such a simpler equivalent of the cipher test has been proposed by Professor Stevenson (Stevenson, 1968, 1976). In this form of test, what is deposited by the intending communicator is a combination lock which has been set by him to a number known only to himself. The hope is that he will prove his survival by communicating this number through a medium after his own bodily death. This test is like the cipher test in that nothing is written down. They may, therefore, both be called examples of an 'unrecorded information' test. Both have the advantage of the possibility of numerous attempts at verification without spoiling the test for future use. The combination lock test has the advantage of requiring a relatively simple operation from those taking part in it, a necessity if the test is to be widely used. Already Professor Stevenson has a number of locks set. Some of those who have set locks have since died, but I have not heard that any of them have communicated the number to which their locks have been set. We may have to wait for more applications of the test before we can say confidently that it does not succeed. I am disappointed to learn from Professor Stevenson that many of those wishing to use his test find the setting of a combination lock a too formidable task. It is obviously less so than the putting of a passage into cipher. We must hope that in the future someone will think of a possible unrecorded bit of information which is simpler than either.

If any of these tests are successful, it will be a strong indication that the ostensible communicators are the surviving spirits of the people they claim to be. If none is successful, this will obviously be grounds for suspicion that there is no survival of bodily death. This, however, would only be a suspicion; it could not be a proof of non-survival since survival is consistent with the possibility that there can be no communication between those still living in their physical bodies and those whose bodies have died. If this turned out to be the case, it would be necessary to look in other directions for evidence of survival than towards attempts at communicating with the departed.

VI. REINCARNATION AND RELATED POSSIBILITIES

A number of different directions which seem to promise evidence as to survival of death have been explored by parapsychologists in recent years. One of the most interesting of these is the evidence which seems to

indicate memory during the present life of events in a previous life on earth. A pioneer in the exploration of this line of evidence has been Professor I. Stevenson at the University of Virginia who, in a series of volumes, has studied carefully the evidence for various claims to memories of former lives made spontaneously by children in different parts of the world (Stevenson, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1983). The typical evidence in these cases is that a child starts claiming membership of a family living in a different village or district and claims knowledge of that district and some of its inhabitants if he is taken to it. Some of the inhabitants of that district may be claimed as relatives and be recognised as such. Such claims by young children are not generally welcomed by their own parents and, even in groups in which reincarnation is an accepted belief, children may be punished for making them. The child may also show such behaviour patterns as phobias and ritual behaviours belonging to the earlier life. Most, but not all, children claiming an earlier life seem to lose these memories and behaviour compulsions as they grow older.

The value of these things as evidence of a reincarnation obviously depends on the correctness of the memories and recognitions in the absence of any normal way in which the child could have obtained knowledge of them. Similarly for the appropriateness of the behaviour compulsions. These matters have been investigated with scrupulous care by Professor Stevenson and those who want to make a judgment for themselves on the reality of reincarnation cannot do better than to make a study of the volumes already referred to. Impartial consideration of the possibility of reincarnation is rendered difficult for most of us by the fact that we are likely to start with a strong prejudice against the idea, since it is not one that belongs to our cultural tradition. We are, however, exploring a region of thought where the true may not be the expected. Reincarnation too must be judged on the evidence available. The beginnings of a study of the evidence may be made by looking at that presented in the above books. Their effect on myself has been, not to create a conviction of the reality of reincarnation, but a realisation that there is a considerable weight of evidence in its favour which is not easily explained on any other hypothesis.

Although these occasional claims to memories of other lives made by children are the most easily testable grounds for belief in reincarnation, they are not the only kind of evidence that is available. There are also memories of adults which may be spontaneous or induced by such a process as hypnosis. An example of what is claimed to be a spontaneous adult recall of an earlier life is to be found in a book by Edward Ryall describing his 'memories' of a previous life in seventeenth-century England (Ryall, 1974). We may, I think, accept Professor Stevenson's judgment that this book is not a hoax or a deliberately produced work of fiction as are many accounts of alleged lives in former incarnations. This

is the story of John Fletcher who is reported to have lived in Somerset during the reign of James II and to have been killed in a skirmish shortly before the battle of Sedgemoor. Whatever may be the psychological origin of the story, it seems to have presented itself to the author as a system of memories. This is not inconsistent with the possibility that its real origin was a process of unconscious phantasy such as leads to dreams during sleep. These too may be vivid and not always clearly distinguishable from memories. Mr. Ryall's account of his own previous life may be read for its own interest even if we are doubtful of its claim to be a historical record of past events. It may also be read for its parapsychological interest as an illustration of the difficulty of making a certain discrimination between memories and phantasies of the past.

No doubt it is an argument for the genuineness of the author's memories if he shows knowledge of seventeenth-century events and customs that he could not have acquired in the course of his reading. The difficulty of applying this argument is that of showing that any verifiable detail could not have been learned accidentally in the course of his reading without any special study of the period. At the same time, it seems unrealistic to regard occasional errors of fact or of language as evidence against the reality of Ryall's memories. It seems that he was in error in his account of how syllabubs were made and that he used the adverb 'vastly' a century or so before this word came into common use. If the author was really remembering a past life, he was doing something like what any of us might do if we were asked to write memories of our early childhood. We should, no doubt, make many errors of fact and of language. If Ryall was really recording memories of a previous life, these were memories of a time further back than the childhood of the oldest of us and a few mistakes are to be expected.

My own doubts of the reality of Ryall's memories are not based on his occasional errors but rather on the fact that they seem to me to be too accurate for genuine memories. In my own childhood memories is included an incident of my father coming into the bedroom one morning and telling us that the church bells were ringing because Queen Victoria was dead. I can remember this but I could not possibly remember what day of the week it was, and I only remember the year (1901) because I have seen this in history books as the year in which Edward VII started his reign. Yet Ryall claims to remember the exact date and even the day of the week for many of the historical events which he claims to have witnessed (e.g. Ryall, 1974 p. 154). This seems to be an incredible feat of memory even for a shorter period than three hundred years.

My doubt as to the author's power of separating remembered fact from unconscious phantasy is heightened by his emphasis on some entirely erroneous evidence based on his absurd claim to have recognised Halley's comet in 1910 as one that he had seen before in his earlier life. He does not

seem to have realised that there is nothing about the appearance of a comet that would enable one to say whether one had seen that particular comet before. Certainly what was afterwards known as 'Halley's comet' did appear in 1682, but nobody could tell by having looked at it that it was the same comet as that of 1910. I suspect that Ryall's memory is at fault here and that what he told his father was simply that he had seen a comet before. This indeed might have been the case in his present life without any previous incarnation since there was a very bright comet, much more spectacular than was Halley's comet, in the January of 1910. This remains a very vivid memory of my early youth and may also have been seen by Ryall even if he later forgot the fact that it was a memory of this life. The comet of January 1910 had little newspaper publicity at the time and may have been unknown to Ryall's father, who thought that his son was romancing when he claimed already to have seen a comet.

To raise these queries is not to deny that Ryall's 'memories' of his previous life may have been genuine ones. They do, however, draw attention to the difficulties of proving whether they were so or not. The alternative would seem to be that they were unconscious phantasies masquerading in his consciousness as memories. The only convincing proof of their status as memories would be their correspondence with verifiable historical fact to a greater extent than could reasonably be attributed to accident or to information that the author may have picked up unwittingly from written sources. This proof is obviously not easy to get. We must make the best judgment we can on the evidence available and hope that future research will strengthen the evidence one way or the other.

Such future research may not depend on further study of spontaneous memories of past lives like that claimed by Ryall. There is also a closely related form of evidence of reincarnation in which the 'memory' of a former life does not occur spontaneously but is induced by some such process as suggestion under hypnosis. Hypnotists have used a process in which the hypnotised subject is made to live again in memory some specified period in his childhood. This has been called 'hypnotic age regression'. The success of this process leads one to ask whether the subject could go on a step further back and produce memories of a life before his present one ('prenatal regression'). The giving of a suggestion that past lives shall be remembered does seem, with some hypnotised subjects, to succeed in making them produce what are claimed to be memories of earlier lives. Whether these are true memories or merely unconscious phantasies is a more difficult question to be answered by enquiries of the same sort as are applied to such spontaneous 'memories' as Ryall's.

Reports of such 'memories' recovered under hypnosis were made by the psychiatrist, Alexander Cannon (Cannon, 1953). Cannon stated then that he had investigated well over a thousand cases of hypnotised patients

reporting such past lives and that he had been forced to admit reluctantly that there was such a thing as reincarnation. The case for the reality of reincarnation cannot, however, rest on the number of people who claim under hypnosis to remember past lives; this proves only the effectiveness of hypnotic suggestion to produce such 'memories'. It does not guarantee the genuineness of the memories. Cannon's cases are not reported in sufficient detail for the reader to be able to make any judgment as to whether they show more correspondence with verifiable fact than is consistent with the possibility that they were unconscious phantasies. Some of them look like phantasies, as, for example, the reports on pp. 190 *ff.* of his book about previous lives on the planet Venus. We know now better than was known in 1953 how unlikely it is that there are any organisms on Venus capable of bearing streams of consciousness. This obviously gives no ground for supposing that all the memories of past lives are fictitious, but it does raise doubts as to their reliability.

A better attested enquiry of the same type is to be found in the well-known book *The Search for Bridey Murphy* (Bernstein, 1956). This is an account of an experiment carried out by a man of business with a special knowledge of and skill in hypnotism. He followed closely Cannon's method of first getting his subject under hypnosis to remember incidents from her early childhood and then giving the suggestion that she would be able to recover memories from further back in another place and time. Under the influence of this suggestion, his subject produced memories which were ostensibly of a life in Ireland under the name of Bridey Murphy. This life was said to have come to an end about a hundred years earlier (in 1864). This story invites enquiry into correspondence between its details and ascertainable facts about life in Belfast at that time. Obviously such evidence will be difficult to obtain after that lapse of time. The enquiry was made by a journalist William J. Barker and is printed as Part 4 of the second edition of the book about Bridey Murphy. The amount of such evidence turns out to be disappointingly although not surprisingly small. It would be difficult for any of us, remember our early childhood in this life, to produce much that could be checked by investigators a hundred years later. It would be still more difficult for us to produce much that those investigators could be sure had not been found out by us in our present lifetime from the same or other written sources. On the cover of my copy of the book about Bridey Murphy is printed the question: "Does this book prove life after death?". I am afraid that the answer we must give to this question is "No", although we may also add that it does make a significant addition to the total evidence pointing that way. It also has importance in drawing attention to a research tool (hypnotic prenatal regression) which may help our successors to give a more definite answer to this question in a few years time.

VII. STRANDS IN SURVIVAL THEORY

We have so far discussed two possible sets of ideas about what may happen to the human stream of consciousness after bodily death. One was that this stream of consciousness goes on after the death of the body it once controlled and that it may, under the special conditions of the mediumistic séance, interchange messages with those still living in the body. The other was that such surviving streams of consciousness may inform and control other bodies (human or animal) after the physical death of its first body. Both sets of ideas entail the denial of the theory of non-survival. We may be tempted to set them up as rival theories of survival and to engage in polemics in favour of one against the other. I think, however, that this is to misunderstand the relationship between them. They are obviously not the same set of ideas but also they do not contradict one another; the truth of one of them does not entail the falsity of the other. They are, I think, best considered not as rival theories of survival but as different but not incompatible elements, or strands, in survival theory which may be variously combined with each other and with other elements to make a total picture of survival.

In order to discuss the various strands which may enter into a survival belief system, it will be convenient to give these strands names which are derived from the way in which they deal with the problem of what happens to the stream of consciousness after bodily death. I have elsewhere suggested that the simple idea of the stream of consciousness going on uninterrupted by the death of the body should be called the theory of 'continued survival' (Thouless, 1979). It is perhaps the most natural idea of survival, at least the one that seems most natural now, although it may not have been the earliest one. It is an essential element in what is meant by 'survival' in Spiritualism and by 'immortality' in Christian thought.

We could represent the basic idea of continued survival by means of a diagram in which this present life was shown as a continuous line starting at the moment of birth and replaced at the moment of death by a dotted line which goes on endlessly. This diagram represents the simple idea of continued survival. If we make (or imagine) such a diagram, it may suggest further questions. We may ask, for example, what kind of existence the stream of consciousness is supposed to have during the periods represented by a dotted line. Is it to be thought of as wholly spiritual without any kind of embodiment? This is perhaps what is implied by the use of the term 'soul' for what survives bodily death. Alternatively, the stream of consciousness may be supposed, after the death of the body, to have a quasi-material vehicle which may be called the 'astral body' (Muldoon and Carrington, 1929). We might also ask ourselves whether the line which represents the going on of a stream of

consciousness should necessarily be shown as starting at the moment of birth or whether a dotted line might not also be shown for the period before birth, indicating the possibility of the existence of a stream of consciousness before it becomes embodied. These, however, are questions that go beyond the simple proposition of continued survival which is just that the stream of consciousness goes on after bodily death.

It may also help clarity of thought on these matters if we give to the idea of reincarnation a name derived from what is supposed to happen to the stream of consciousness on this theory. I suggest that it should be called the theory of 'intermittent revival'. To represent this theory diagrammatically, we should need to represent each stream of consciousness by a short, continuous line broke off at the time of the death of one body and resumed at its rebirth in another body. Theoretically this theory might be combined with the theory of continued survival by supposing that, between one death and the subsequent rebirth, a continuous stream of mental life goes on although there is no physical body to support it. This situation could be represented on our diagram by drawing a dotted line to connect the bits of continuous line which represent different embodiments of the same stream of consciousness. The alternative theory, that the stream of consciousness does not go on between successive reincarnations, has not, so far as I know, been adopted by any social group (such as the Buddhists and Hindus) which accepts intermittent revival as part of its belief system. The Buddhist scriptures, for example, include accounts of heavens and hells experienced by the dead between successive incarnations. Such experiences obviously imply a continuing stream of consciousness between incarnations; they entail belief in intermittent revival and also in continued survival.

Intermittent revival is not, however, the only form of revival theory held by religious groups; there is also the theory of resurrection which belongs to the Jewish and Christian traditions. In this theory, the re embodiment, supposed by the intermittent revival theory to take place repeatedly, takes place only once, on the Day of Resurrection when the stream of consciousness is reunited with the body. This may be called the theory of 'terminal revival'. A very clear and authoritative account of this theory as held in the Christian tradition is to be found in the well-known fifteenth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. Although this doctrine may have earlier been interpreted as a theory of the revivication of the physical body which decayed in the grave, this view was specifically rejected by St. Paul. He considered the development of the resurrection body as a process analogous to that of the germination of a seed in which the seed perishes and is replaced by something new. He sums up his view in the cryptic phrase: "It is sown a psychic body; it is raised a pneumatic body". In modern translations this is generally rendered in some such form as that of the Revised Standard Version of

the Bible: "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body". This seems to make the meaning of the passage more clear, but this apparent clarity may be illusory. It may be safer to retain St. Paul's original Greek words 'psychic' and 'pneumatic' to avoid the temptation to imagine that we altogether understand his thought.

Like the theory of intermittent revival, that of terminal revival may or may not be combined with that of continued survival, giving two different forms of survival theory incorporating the idea of resurrection. Both of these forms of resurrection theory have, in fact, been held by different Christian groups. If the expectations of terminal revival and continued survival are combined, the stream of consciousness must be supposed to go on after physical death, although it is not physically embodied until the resurrection has taken place. This idea of a totally disembodied consciousness has been found difficult by some people. The alternative is to accept terminal revival while rejecting continued survival. The period between death and resurrection is then considered to be one in which the stream of consciousness is in abeyance until it is given a physical vehicle by the resurrection of the body.

The combination of the ideas of terminal revival with those of continued survival is the form of survival theory generally held by Christians at the present day. It is true that the alternative view, with abeyance of consciousness between death and resurrection, has been held by some Christian groups in the past as it is still by Jehovah's Witnesses and by Seventh Day Adventists. The more common type of Christian belief is expressed in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead [in terminal revival] and the life everlasting [continued survival]". We may suspect that the average modern Christian reciting his creed has a more lively belief in the life everlasting than in the resurrection of the body, which has tended to become a somewhat shadowy belief during the past few centuries.

This was certainly not the case in the early days of Christianity when the main emphasis was on terminal revival, and there seems to have been some doubt as to whether the idea of continued survival could be accepted at all. One may read St. Paul's famous chapter on resurrection without being able to discover whether or not he regarded the stream of consciousness as going on in the period between death and resurrection. I suspect that if he had been asked this question he would have answered, with some impatience, that the matter was of no importance. Not very long afterwards both views, affirming and denying continued survival, seem to have been held by different bodies of Christians. Thus, Justin Martyr, during the first half of the second century A.D., seems to have rejected the idea of continued survival. He stigmatised as un-Christian the view that the souls of the departed ascend to Heaven at the very moment of their death, contrasting this with the 'entirely orthodox'

Christian view that there will be a resurrection of the flesh (Williams, 1930).

It seems safe to conclude that both elements, that of terminal revival and that of continued survival, were current in early Christian survival beliefs and that there was different emphasis on them by different groups. Probably those emphasising the factor of continued survival thought, like Justin, that theirs was the only entirely orthodox view. There is much to suggest that, after the early centuries of Christianity, the element of continued survival became more important in Christian thinking although it did not, of course, replace the idea of terminal revival which remained enshrined in the creeds. One factor in this increased emphasis on continued survival may have been its superior consolatory power. To think of a lamented individual as still thinking and still having needs is obviously more consoling than to think of his consciousness as in abeyance until the day of resurrection. One may even present prayer for him which need not be confined to praying for his well-being on the Day of Resurrection.

The type of prayer used for the departed in such religious groups as practise prayer for the dead is a behavioural criterion of what kind of survival theory is held. The use of such a criterion is preferable to relying solely on what members of the group say they believe. It is true that some Christian groups do not pray for their dead. One cannot, of course, infer from this that they do not believe in survival, but one criterion for what they believe about survival is not available.

The mere fact of prayer being made for the departed implies some form of survival belief, but it does not necessarily imply belief in continued survival; it may only imply belief in the deceased person's terminal revival. There is, for example, a prayer for one Onesiphorus in the First Epistle to Timothy (1.16): "I pray that the Lord may grant him mercy from the Lord on the Great Day". If, as appears from the context, Onesiphorus was dead, there is no suggestion, in this form of prayer, that his consciousness was thought of as going on after death. I do not know when in Christianity forms of prayer for the dead that implied existing streams of consciousness (in deceased persons) were first used, but this practice must have begun soon after that time of the writing of Timothy. About A.D. 217, Tertullian referred to a Christian widow praying for the soul of her husband and asking that he might have fellowship in the first resurrection (implying terminal revival) and also that he might have refreshment in the meanwhile (implying his continued survival). This is a clear case of a prayer for the dead implying continued survival early in the third century, but such prayer may have been used considerably earlier than that. Both kinds of prayer are found to be in use at the present time by those Christian groups that do pray for their dead. The relative emphasis on the two kinds of survival belief may be judged

by comparing the frequency of the two kinds of prayer in a modern liturgy. Although both forms seem to date from early times, I have the impression that, during the centuries, prayer implying continued survival has grown relatively more common. It is interesting to note that the earliest record that we have of prayer for the dead in the Jewish tradition (in Maccabees II, 12) is in a form which implies terminal revival but leaves open the question of whether the dead were existent consciousnesses at the time of the offering of the prayer. This is interesting as bearing on the question of what kind of survival theory seems to have been held at this very early time. The second book of Maccabees is supposed to have been written some time during the first century B.C., but the incident referred to belongs to a century before this. Judas Maccabeus had found on the bodies of some of his slain soldiers objects which they should not have had because they had been consecrated as idols. So he is said to have sent a *sin* offering to the priests at Jerusalem that they might be delivered from their sin. The author of Maccabees II makes a comment on this incident which emphasises its connection with the idea of terminal revival: "doing therein very well and honestly, in that he was mindful of the resurrection: For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead". This incident in the history of prayer for the dead seems to support the suggestion that the idea of terminal revival in the Jewish-Christian tradition may have been an early form of survival theory which later became somewhat overshadowed by the more consolatory idea of continued survival.

It may seem odd that the idea of resurrection is rarely, if ever, mentioned by psychical researchers as one of the survival possibilities, although it is the predominant religious tradition of survival in the culture in which psychical research has developed. This is, no doubt, due to the fact that terminal revival is not verifiable by any of the kinds of empirical test used, for example, to establish continued survival. This follows from the fact that the Day of Resurrection is not supposed to have happened yet, so we cannot devise any test for present use that would find out anything about it. If a religious tradition contains a belief in continued survival as well as the expectation of terminal revival, that element of the total belief can, of course, be investigated by the psychical researcher, although such investigation may not be encouraged by the religious group. But the idea of terminal revival cannot itself be tested empirically and so it is of no research interest to the psychical investigator. It should, however, be noted by him as one of the forms that survival theory may take even though there seems to be nothing more that he can do about it. It may even be a true theory of survival and may explain some of the difficulties found in survival research. What is empirically unverifiable may nevertheless be the case.

A common feature of all the survival theories so far discussed is that they picture survival as a process going on in the time which we experience in our present life. This, however, may not be a correct way of looking at the possibilities. A statement sometimes made by the communicator in a mediumistic séance is that there is no time in the next world. This statement seems sometimes to be made without clear realisation of its implications, since the same communicator may report that he is now in a certain sphere of the next world to which he has been transferred since the last séance at which he communicated. But this is obviously inconsistent with the statement that there is no time in the next world. If there is a relationship of before and after and there are changes which may be before or after each other, then there is time. Indeed, without any time there could be no events, since an event is a change in which one situation comes after another. An afterlife in which there was no time would have to be one in which there were no events. An afterlife in which nothing happened may be a possibility but it is not one that is imaginable to us. If we want to keep our theories within the limits of the imaginable and still take seriously the statement of communicators as to there being no time there, we should, I think, consider the possibility that there is something odd and unexpected about time in the next world which the communicator is trying unsuccessfully to express by the statement that there is no time in the next world. That time in the next world may have some odd and unexpected properties does not seem unlikely.

Those who accept the authority of the Christian tradition about a future life may consider that the timeless nature of the life after death is implied by the use of the term 'eternal life'. This term does not, however, seem to be used in the New Testament to refer to the life after bodily death but rather to the timeless character of the spiritual life in all its stages, during our present life as well as in our continued life after death.

A less drastic theory of time in the next life than that of no time is one that considers the possibility that the consciousness of those whose bodies have died may go on in a different dimension of time from the time of our present life. If we tried to represent this theory in a two-dimensional diagram, we should have to draw a continuous line which ran off on a different plane at an angle to the first one. The moment of death would be represented on the diagram by the intersection of these two lines, but the theory that this life and the life of the next world were lived in different dimensions of time would entail that there were no other points common to both lines. So, although this theory allows for the existence of events in the afterlife and for these events to have the relationships of before and after to each other, it would not make any sense to assert a time relationship between any events in that world and any set of events in this world; we could not say, for example, that an event in the afterlife took place at a certain time as recorded in this world. Such a possibility would

be excluded by the theory of different dimensions of time in the two worlds. So, on this theory, as on the theory of no time in the next world, the possibility of communication between individuals in this world and the next would seem to be excluded. Such communication requires a time common to both worlds during which communication takes place. Without such common time, there could be no communication. If the evidence in future confirms the view that such communication does take place, in séances or in other settings, this would have to be regarded not only as evidence for continued survival but also as evidence against survival without time or in a different dimension of time.

It remains possible, of course, that, as has already been suggested, there is something about time in the next world that appears odd to those entering that world. This oddity may fall short of the next world being without time or in a different dimension of time. There is not much profit now in speculating as to what that oddity might be. We can only note the state of evidence on such topics as communication with the departed and avoid any theories incompatible with that evidence. Perhaps we shall understand the matter when we get there. In the meantime, I suggest that we should be prepared for something unexpected about our experience of time after our bodily death.

VIII. IS THERE A SOUL?

The evidence for survival so far considered has been of two kinds. First, there is that derived from 'communicators' in mediumistic séances which are ostensibly surviving streams of consciousness which had perhaps been known to some of the sitters while they were still in their physical bodies. Secondly, there is the kind of evidence suggestive of reincarnation in which the subjects claim to have memories of an earlier life in a different body from their present one. Both kinds of evidence point towards some kind of conscious survival of death; neither can yet be accepted as providing conclusive proof of such survival. There does not seem to be sufficient reason for supposing that this verdict of 'not proven' is a final one; we do not know how strong the evidence will have become in a few more years of investigation. Many people have indeed already found the evidence of its present level sufficient to produce conviction. These include men and women of good knowledge and sound judgment such as the eminent physicist Sir Oliver Lodge (Lodge, 1930). It is also true that a large number of other people, also of good knowledge and judgment, reject both of the above lines of evidence, feeling that they are not yet strong enough to overcome what they feel to be the intrinsic unlikelihood of there being any survival of death.

Much of the case for regarding survival of death as unlikely rests on the conviction that there is nothing in human life which could go on after

bodily death. This conviction needs critical examination. It is true that our activity in the world and our experience of the world depend on the activity of an extremely complex system of nerves of which the human brain contains an enormous number. The experiences and decisions which make up our stream of consciousness seem to depend on the activity of this system of nerves. An injury that stops nervous activity for a time causes a temporary ending of all our experiencing and deciding. Is it then reasonable to suppose that the more permanent injury of bodily death, which leads to a total cessation of nervous activity and ultimately to disintegration of the brain and the rest of the nervous system, will not also lead to the ending of that process of experiencing and deciding which we call our 'stream of consciousness'? If we accept the common sense notion that the stream of consciousness is merely a by-product of the activity of the nervous system, the answer must be 'No'. Still more emphatically must it be 'No' if we accept the more radical view that the stream of consciousness is identical with the happenings in the central nervous system.

On the other hand, neither of these opinions is made necessary by what we know of the activity of the nervous system. Either of them may be held as a working opinion by a neurologist, and one who holds it will obviously be predisposed not to accept the possibility of survival. Yet some neurologists do not hold either of these views and may indeed reject them on neurological grounds, that is, because these opinions lead to expectations that are not fulfilled. We may be thus led to the alternative view that the stream of consciousness has a reality of its own, and that it uses the brain and nervous system as a human operator uses a computer. Some eminent neurologists have come to the conclusion that this is how things are with respect to the relationship between the mind and the brain. This, for example, was the opinion to which the distinguished neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield was led after a lifetime of research on brain activity (Penfield, 1975). At the age of seventy-eight, he said that throughout his scientific career, he had shared the opinion of other scientists that the brain accounts for the mind, but that he had finally come to question this opinion. He now found it more logical and better fitting the known facts to regard our being as consisting of two fundamental elements, mind and matter. On this view, the material brain may be considered to be used as a source of energy and for the supply of sensory information and of memories which are needed for the direction of its activities. There are other mental activities which, unlike sensation and memory, cannot, in Penfield's opinion, be performed by the material brain itself. Examples given are believing and deciding. In Penfield's view, these are operations which can be performed only by the immaterial mind.

This opinion was based on much experimental work on the effects of electrical stimulation of different places on the surface of the brain of

patients undergoing brain operations. By such stimulation, Penfield found that he could arouse memories or produce an illusion of interpretation, but that there was no point on the brain at which electrical stimulation could cause a patient to believe or to decide. In other words, there seemed to be no point on the surface of the brain at which electrical stimulation can activate the mind.

This does not, of course, provide evidence of the mind surviving bodily death; its importance is that it undermines one of the most powerful arguments against survival, that there can be nothing to survive after the dissolution of the material nervous system. It remains true that the idea of the mind as an independent entity is quite consistent with the idea that this entity ceases to exist when bodily death takes place. Penfield himself discusses the possibility of the survival of the mind after the disintegration of the material brain. He regards such survival as not impossible, but he obviously does not think it very likely to be the case. If one accepts Penfield's view that the activity of the mind depends on the transfer of energy from the material brain, it does certainly seem unlikely that there could be any mind activity when there is no longer any material brain. The only possibility would be that the mind might continue after bodily death by utilising another source of energy. He considers that the possibility of the mind using another source of energy would be demonstrated if it could be shown that during life there could be direct communication with another mind. To most parapsychologists it would seem that this has already been shown by the numerous experiments in Rhine's laboratory and elsewhere demonstrating the reality of extrasensory perception. If this is agreed, it follows that what Penfield regards as the first step in demonstrating the possibility of survival has already been taken. So Penfield's line of thought, while not proving the possibility of survival, does take a considerable step in that direction.

Another neuroscientist who gives strong support to the view that the mind (or the self-conscious self) is something other than the physical brain is Sir John Eccles. His views are best studied in the book he has written jointly with Karl Popper (Popper and Eccles, 1977). It is interesting to note that the title chosen for this book, *The Self and Its Brain*, is one that assumes the common sense view of the brain as an instrument of the mind. This indeed is the opinion of both authors. The brain and the self are distinguished by Popper as belonging to different regions of reality: the brain to World One, that of physical objects (including living organisms), and the self to World Two, the region of reality to which belong consciousness and self-consciousness. Although this implies essential difference between the self and the brain, it does not imply that one of these can exist without the other. Popper does not, in fact, think that consciousness could go on existing without a physical body to support it. He is, however, prepared to agree that his opinion on this matter might be

changed by the progress of psychical research, although he regards such a development as unlikely.

The coauthor Eccles, whose life has been spent in study of the complexity of the brain and nervous system, also agrees that the self-conscious mind is something different from the neural machinery, although these interact. This interaction, in the view of Eccles, takes place at certain 'liaison' areas of the brain's surface. Through the nerve cells of these liaison areas, the mind receives information about the outside world and is able to act on this world. So perception and voluntary action can be regarded as products of the interaction of the self-conscious mind with the physical brain at the liaison areas of the brain. Eccles considers that the unity of consciousness is contributed by the self-conscious mind itself and not by its neural machinery. As to whether this self-conscious mind can survive bodily death, he quotes an opinion he expressed in an earlier book (Eccles, 1970) in which he said: "I cannot believe that the wonderful gift of a conscious existence has no further future, no possibility of another existence under some other unimaginable conditions" (p. 83). It is to be noted, however, that this opinion is put forward, not on neurological, but on general grounds. We cannot claim either Penfield or Eccles as witnesses for a neurological case for survival. They do, however, give good reason for doubt of the validity of the commonly accepted argument that our knowledge of the part played by the brain and nervous system in the process of conscious thought provides sufficient reason for rejecting the possibility that conscious processes may go on after the death of the body.

There are indeed serious theoretical objections to the common neurological view that the events in the nervous system are the only realities in mental processes. Whether these are real and effective or not, conscious processes do go on at the same time as the corresponding events in the nervous system. I am aware of having made a decision when the nervous events heralding a course of action have taken place in my brain. If this awareness has no effect on the course of action, we are left with the question of what is its biological purpose. To say that it has none is, as pointed out by Popper (Popper and Eccles, 1977, p. 88), a denial of the basic principle of evolutionary theory that the reason for the development of any characteristic of an organism is its biological usefulness to the organism in the struggle for existence. The eye developed because of its usefulness as a means of seeing; we cannot suppose that consciousness itself evolved without serving any biological purpose. This argument rules out any theory which asserts mere parallelism between the events of mind and body and which regards conscious processes as mere 'epiphenomena' with no more real effect on the organism than has the noise of a passing train on the train itself. The self-conscious mind must, on the contrary, be regarded as itself real and as having real effects on the physical organism.

This is not, of course, sufficient reason for supposing that this self-conscious mind goes on after bodily death; at best it may be claimed as an argument for the possibility of survival. It provides a reason for believing that the self-conscious mind is such an entity as might go on by itself after destruction of the body; that it has, in fact, some of the characteristics that are implied by the term 'soul'. Our knowledge of the human nervous system does not forbid us to believe in the possibility of an immortal human soul.

IX. OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES

There are, however, more direct ways of investigating the reality of the human soul. One of the most promising of these is provided by the not uncommon experience of being apparently out of the physical body and of seeing the world from a point of view outside that body. These are now commonly called 'Out-of-the-Body' experiences (OBEs). The person having such an experience commonly reports that he (or she) is seeing the surroundings from a point outside the physical body which may itself be seen as an object in the field of vision (Green, 1968). He may report, for example, that he seemed to be floating somewhere near the ceiling and that, looking down on his bed, he saw his body lying there, perhaps being attended to by doctors and nurses. He may even report what is said by these attendants.

Such experiences may follow from an accident to the body or from the administration of an anaesthetic, but sometimes they seem to occur spontaneously or even at will. Some people claim to be able to produce the state of OBE voluntarily, as, for example, the author of a book called *Journeys Out of the Body* (Monroe, 1971). None of those who claim to be able to induce OBEs at will seem to be able to describe how they do so sufficiently clearly to enable other people to follow their example. This is unfortunate since, if a large number of people could be trained to have OBEs when they wanted to, it would make experimenting on the subject much easier. It is generally agreed by writers on the subject that one of the necessary preconditions for an OBE is complete muscular relaxation but, unfortunately, the induction of a state of muscular relaxation does not, for most people, ensure an OBE. Methods of inducing OBEs in those not experiencing them spontaneously is a matter about which more must be found out.

One of the earlier studies of OBEs was that of Sylvan Muldoon and Hereward Carrington (Muldoon and Carrington, 1929). The 'astral body' referred to in the title of this book is not to be understood as meaning either the stream of consciousness or the immortal soul of the religions. It stands rather for a particular theory about the stream of consciousness: that this has a quasi-material vehicle, the astral body,

which survives the death and dissolution of the physical body and which may occasionally become separate from the physical body during the course of life, in the out-of-the-body states. This is not in conflict with the theory of a continuing soul, but is rather to be understood as a particular theory of the continuing soul. It may be the true one; there is much to be said in its favour, but it has not yet been experimentally demonstrated. It is indeed difficult to see how the truth of this theory could be shown experimentally, but in a way to do this may be found in the future.

Our present concern is with the reality of the out-of-the-body experience; we can leave on one side the question of its nature. If the OBE is taken at its face value, it obviously lends support to the idea of a soul, whether wholly immaterial or not, which may go on after bodily death. But the critic of survival theory may consider that the OBE is simply a hallucination in which there is an erroneous impression of the mind being separated from the body and of the world being seen from a point of view outside the body. If the OBE is no more than a hallucination, its occurrence has obviously no bearing on the question of the reality of the soul or on the problem of survival. How then can we distinguish experimentally between the possibilities of the OBE being an indication of a real separation between the stream of consciousness and its normal bodily vehicle and of it being a hallucination?

This is not such a simple matter as one might hope. An obvious way of trying to get an answer to it is to see whether the person ostensibly experiencing an OBE can make a correct report of things and events at the place where his seat of consciousness is claimed to be. If this were successful, however, it could not be regarded as sufficient evidence for the reality of a separation of the seat of consciousness from the physical body, since such a report might be made by ESP without any abnormal relocation of the seat of consciousness. Such reports of distance scenes have indeed been used as tests of ESP. What would be needed would be, at least, a clear demonstration that an OBE subject can succeed better in this task than can someone who is merely using ESP. Although there is a good deal of anecdotal evidence of correct statements being made by OBE subjects about events in their supposed location, there does not seem to be yet any clear demonstration that these achieve a standard of correctness greater than possible by ESP. So this line of evidence for the reality of OBEs does not yet seem to have been achieved; let us hope that it will be in the not too distant future.

Another possibility of experimental verification of the reality of the OBE experience would be the perception of some other person (or animal) of the person undergoing the OBE at the place where his seat of consciousness appears to himself to be located. If, for example, a person experiencing an OBE during an operation in hospital were seen by the doctors or nurses to be floating near the ceiling and watching them, there could

remain no doubt that this experience was not merely a hallucination of the OB experient. No such observation has, so far as I know, ever been made, although there is a certain amount of anecdotal evidence of other persons being aware of the presence of an OB experient at a place remote from his physical body (e.g., Borzymowski, 1965, pp. 266-67; Sidgwick *et alii*, 1894, pp. 270-78; Sidgwick, Mrs. H., 1891, pp. 41-46). There have also been experiments in which a domestic animal (usually a cat) has been placed where the OB experient is supposed to be, with the intention that his presence, if it is real, will be indicated by the behaviour of the animal (Morris *et alii*, 1978). There do not seem to be any decisive results from such experiments, and the reality of the OBE remains a problem for the future.

The future solution of this problem may depend on the devising of new methods of experimenting on it. One such possible new line of experimenting has been started by Osis (1973). The essence of his new experimental idea was to devise an arrangement of a test object so that the object would be differently described from different points of view. It was hoped then that it would be possible to deduce the point of observation of the OB experient from the description he gave of the test object. This is an ingenious idea which deserved to succeed. Unhappily the experiment has not given as clear-cut an answer to the question as might have been hoped for. There are some indications that the OB experient is looking at the object from the point of view which he is supposed to be occupying while out of the body, but the evidence is by no means strong. We must wait for results from further experiments along these or similar lines. In the meantime, we may note the out-of-body experience as a promising field for further research, not indeed leading directly to the survival problem but to a problem preliminary to this, that of the reality of the human soul. This is not merely a problem preliminary to that of survival but is also an important and interesting problem in its own right.

X. APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD

It is generally supposed that one of the reasons for which people are inclined to believe that those whose bodies have died may themselves go on leading a conscious existence is that it frequently happens that their forms are seen by living people after their bodily death. They may be seen as apparently carrying out activities in the physical world, although these activities do not seem generally to have any physical results. A relatively small number of people seem to have such an experience themselves, but a considerably larger number may be acquainted with someone who has.

I have never, for example, myself seen the apparition of a person who has died, but I had a near neighbour who reported that she had seen her

husband walk into the breakfast room dressed in his ordinary clothes, several days after his bodily death. Such experiences may be commoner than is ordinarily supposed, since they may not be willingly reported. The lady in question did not generally tell people about her experience because she was afraid of creating the impression that she was becoming mentally unbalanced.

This experience is often called that of 'seeing a ghost'. The question may be asked: "Do you believe in ghosts?" The cautious parapsychologist might answer: "I certainly believe that some people have a kind of visual experience which they call that of 'seeing a ghost'. Whether there is any object which we may call a 'ghost' involved in this experience is a matter to be found out by further inquiry".

It is not to be found out by considering the implications of the language we use. Whether we talk of 'ghosts' or of 'hallucinations', our choice of language may be misleading as to fact although a correct guide as to the speaker's opinion. If someone says that he saw a ghost on a certain occasion, he is using language that implies that there was something there to see. There may, in fact, have been nothing; the experience may have been a mere hallucination, a product of the percipient's own mental activity. Such hallucinations are found commonly in some forms of insanity and as rare events in the lives of people showing no other sign of mental abnormality.

Since such a phrase as "he saw a ghost" seems to imply a theory about this experience, that it had a real object, this way of talking should be avoided in exact thinking. Equally to be avoided is a way of talking about the experience which implies the opposite theory, that the experience was merely the product of the percipient's own mind. This is what is implied by the use of the term 'hallucination' to include all such seeings. This way of talking seems to have been started by the early psychical researchers who entitled their enquiry into the frequency and nature of such appearances a *Census of Hallucinations* (Sidgwick *et alii*, 1894). The enquiry itself was a good and fruitful one, but its title was unfortunately chosen. We certainly need to know all that can be found out about the nature and frequency of apparitional appearances as a preliminary to making a judgment as to whether or to what extent they are hallucinations. It seems to have been an unfortunate mistake to prejudge this question by deciding to call them 'hallucinations'. It would have been better to begin their study by the use of some neutral name, such as 'apparitions', which does not imply either the reality or unreality of the apparent objects which are reported as seen.

If anyone has the experience of seeing an apparition of someone he knows to have suffered bodily death, the most natural way of interpreting this experience is to suppose that he has seen the person who has died as he is now at the time of the seeing. A very natural way of regarding the

experience, but it may very well be a mistaken one. A little thought may produce doubts of this first interpretation of the seeing of an apparition. First, it may occur to the too credulous perceiver that, if an immortal soul were occupying the physical space apparently occupied by the apparition, there is no reason for expecting this to be seen; it would not be fulfilling the conditions which are normally necessary for setting off the process of visual perception of an object. An immortal soul is not a material object, so there is no reason to expect it to have the material object's property of reflecting light waves falling on it. It is much reflected light waves forming an image on the percipient's retina that sets off the normal process of visual perception. If, in the seeing of an apparition, we are, in some sense, seeing something that is really there, it must be by a process different from that of the normal visual perception by which we see physical bodies.

The problem of the nature of the seeing involved in the seeing of an apparition is made too simple if we think of it as a choice between two alternatives: that it is either a passive record of an external fact as presented in the picture projected onto the sensitive surface of the percipient's eyes, or else it is a mere product of his own mind, a hallucination. Both factors, of external stimulation and internal mental activity, may play a part in the seeing of an apparition as they do in the ordinary seeing of everyday life.

It is not generally realised what a large part is played by the percipient's own mind in normal everyday seeing. That this is not merely a passive process of recording the information given by the retinal picture in the percipient's eye is clearly shown by experiments on normal perception such as that of comparing seen shapes and sizes of objects with the shapes and sizes of their images on the retina. These are not generally identical although, of course, changes in the retinal picture generally produce changes in the apparent shapes and sizes of the seen objects. Thus, if we look at a round tabletop from different positions, it is likely to be seen as an ellipse. The picture of the tabletop made by light waves on the retina of the observer's eye may also be elliptical, but these will not usually be the same shaped ellipse; generally the ellipse as seen is nearer to a true circle in shape than is the ellipse of the retinal picture. When we know these facts, we are no longer inclined to regard the seen picture of the outside world as a mere copy of the picture formed on the retina. It looks rather as if the retinal image were not itself perceived but were a source of information to the percipient's mind enabling it to construct a perceptual picture of the outside world which will serve the practical end of guiding his body about that outside world.

If ordinary perception is understood as a construction of the percipient's own mind, it will be no surprise to find that this is the case in the perception of an apparition. This fact is not sufficient reason for classing

all apparitions as 'hallucinations'. Some, no doubt, are just that; the seeing of the apparition may be entirely the result of the percipient's own mental activity. It may also be the case that the activity of the percipient's own mind plays a larger part in the seeing of an apparition than it does in the seeing of a tabletop. This, however, is a difference in degree and not in kind; there may still be a factor in the seeing of an apparition which plays the part of reality guidance as does stimulation of the retina by patterns of light waves in the seeing of chairs and tables that are physically present.

There is, of course, a case for considering that there is no such informational control involved in the seeing of an apparition of a dead person. Then, indeed, it would be a mere hallucination, and it would contribute nothing to the evidence for survival. This is an arguable view but there are lines of evidence against it. There are, for example, the crisis apparitions with which the *Census of Hallucinations* was particularly concerned. The argument for regarding the apparitions that were studied as having some basis in reality was the frequent correspondence in time of the seeing of an apparition and the occurrence of some crisis in the life of the person apparently seen. If there is some doubt as to how far correspondence in time of crisis and apparitional appearance might be due to chance, there does seem to remain an impressive amount of evidence that not all the coincidences reported in the *Census* can be so explained (Broad, 1962, pp. 99-112; Sidgwick *et alii*, 1894, pp. 245-51). It looks as if at least some of the apparitions reported have some real link with events in the life of the person seen.

More impressive as evidence are the number of cases in which the same apparition has been seen, either simultaneously or successively, by more than one person. These collective apparitional cases are too numerous to be brushed lightly aside. Tyrrell, in his scholarly study of apparitions made in 1942, reports that about one-third of the apparitions appearing when more than one person was there were seen by more than one of those present. It may, however, also be the case that some of those present do not see the apparition although favourably placed for seeing it. This looks as if there is something in the physical space apparently occupied by the apparition, but that this is not a physical object. If it were a physical object, it would be visible to all those present.

A good example of the difficulties in explaining the collective seeing of apparitions is to be found in the well-known 'Cheltenham' ghost reported by Miss Morton (1892) in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. The apparition in this case was the figure of a lady in dark clothes seen in a certain house over a period of years. It was repeatedly seen by Miss Morton and by several other people in the same room. Sometimes it was seen consecutively by different people in what appeared to be a journey through the house or garden. Most puzzling of all, it was never seen by

Miss Morton's father, although he might be present in the room where it was being seen and have its position pointed out to him. This non-perception of an apparition by some of those present is not uncommon and seems to rule out the possibility of explaining the seeing of an apparition as a process parallel to the normal perception of a living person, as might otherwise be concluded from the fact of their frequent collective perception by several people. Even if we agree that what is seen may be a quasi-material something, such as an astral body, its seeing cannot be a result of light waves reflected from its surface. If it were, it should be visible to all those in suitable positions for seeing it. The seeing of an apparition is, therefore, a different kind of process from that of normal seeing. It is, however, a kind of sense perception. As in other sense perceptions, we may regard the seeing of an apparition as an act of the percipient's mind set off by information received from some source, although that source may not be the action of a physical stimulus on a sense organ as normal seeing undoubtedly is.

The questions that we are here concerned with are as to what is the source of information that sets this process off, and whether this source of information gives any reliable guidance as to the survival beyond death of the person seen.

Many years ago, it was suggested by Gurney (Gurney *et alii*, 1886) that the source of an apparitional sighting was a telepathic impulse received from the person who was the apparent object of the apparition. We should now be inclined to use a more general term than 'telepathic' in this theory and to suggest that what plays the part of sensory stimulation in ordinary perception may be, in the case of seeing an apparition, some form of cognitive psi process, of ESP, not necessarily telepathic. If a psi process does play such a part in the seeing of an apparition, this would account for many of the observed characteristics of the seeing of apparitions: for the fact that it is liable to be seen by many of the people present but not by all and that, in some cases, at least, it is likely to coincide with some important crisis in the life of the person apparently seen, such as his bodily death. These characteristics do not necessarily imply the truth of Gurney's 'telepathy' theory, in which the paranormal process involved is analogous to the sending of a message by the one who is apparently seen; they could also follow from a non-telepathic psi process in which the psi process is more analogous to an act of perceiving by those experiencing the apparition.

We are not, however, primarily concerned with the nature of apparitional perception but with how any theory we form about it bears on the question of survival. If we accept Gurney's view that the seeing of an apparition is an experience originated as a telepathic message from the person seen, this seems obviously to imply that this person's stream of consciousness still survives and is able to originate a message. On the more

general theory of the psi origination of apparitional appearances, the matter is not so clear, since the person apparently seen is not supposed to have sent a message but only to have been paranormally perceived. It may, however, still be argued that such paranormal perception could most easily take place if its object were a real surviving person. It is only on the theory that apparitional seeing is a purely hallucinatory experience that it ceases to have any value as evidence of survival. Our judgment as to the strength of the evidence contributed by apparitions of the dead to the survival problem must depend on our judgment as to how far the purely hallucinatory theory of apparitions has been supported by the evidence.

On the whole, it seems that we cannot hope to give a final answer to the problem of survival merely by studying the apparitions of the dead. There is no doubt that these tend to create a strong conviction of survival in those who experience them. If further reflection somewhat weakens the strength of this conviction, it by no means destroys it. If there were no survival of death, one might expect that experiences of apparitions would be less common and perhaps less forcible than, in fact, they are. The occurrences of apparitions and their nature add a substantial strand to the total evidence pointing to the reality of continued conscious existence after the death of the physical body.

XI. THE EXPERIENCES OF THE DYING

A line of investigation somewhat related to those last discussed is the study of the experiences of the dying or of those who have recovered from a state of apparent bodily death. The question that is of interest to us in both of these cases is whether the experiences associated with the death of the body seem to be incidents in a final extinction or whether they suggest passage to a new life. If they do suggest passage to a new life, this cannot obviously be a conclusive evidence that this is what death really is; such experiences may be merely hallucinatory accompaniments to the process of dying. On the other hand, they may be an important line of evidence contributory to an expectation of survival which is also based on other kinds of evidence. It may also suggest valuable information about the nature of a future life and about the process of bodily dying.

One of the first parapsychologists who became interested in the experiences of the dying was the physicist Sir William Barrett whose wife, an obstetrician, had been present at a very convincing deathbed vision of a young mother (Barrett, 1926). Since that time, the subject has not much engaged the attention of parapsychologists who have been more interested in the apparitions of dead or dying persons to their friends than in the apparitions seen by the dying themselves. This has remained the case until recently when interest in how things appeared to the dying was

revived by Osis and a number of other workers in the field (Osis and Haraldsson, 1977). The basis of the Osis-Haraldsson investigation was the systematic collection of reports of what was said by the dying to doctors and nurses. In this respect it resembled the original report of Lady Barrett but differed from it in being based, not on a single observation, but on over a thousand interviews. Its general result resembled that of the earlier case; it seemed to point to a view of death, not as a final departure from existence, but as the beginning of a new life. The data were collected both from India and from the United States. The results tended to be much the same from these widely different cultures.

There were reports of apparitions which seemed to have the function of fetching the dying person to his new life. These might be deceased relatives or unfamiliar forms in bright clothing. These bright forms might be described as angels, as Jesus Christ or as Hindu deities in accordance with the religious expectations of the patient. Some of these were, perhaps, pure hallucinations produced by the mind of the patient and perhaps directly resulting from his illness or from the drugs that were used in its treatment. It did not, however, seem to the investigators that illness or drugs were important factors in causing the apparitions in many of the cases.

The fetching apparitions were generally welcomed as having a benevolent purpose; less often they were regarded as objects of fear. There were also important mood changes before death; often peace and serenity replaced any anxiety that may have been felt earlier, and sometimes there was cessation of bodily pain. In many cases, the experiences associated with the death of the body seem to have been happy ones, and the dying often reported on the beauty of the scenery that they were passing through in the transition to the other side. The total impression was of a passing from one life to another. It would obviously be unreasonable to accept these observations as positive proof of another life after bodily death, but they certainly point that way and must be considered as part of the total evidence that bodily death seems to be a passage to another life.

A close parallel research, published a few years earlier, was Dr. Moody's published under the title *Life After Life* (Moody, 1975). This dealt with somewhat different material, since Moody's patients had all passed through a period when they had been apparently dead but had recovered and been able to report what their experiences during this period of clinical death had been. Nevertheless the findings of the two researches were sufficiently similar for these to be regarded as confirmatory of one another. Both seem to point to bodily death as a transition to another life, and some of the details of what is experienced in this transition are sufficiently alike to suggest that these are genuine characteristics of at least some types of dying.

Moody finds a typical dying experience as that of passing through a

dark passage with light at its end. This took place in a body which was not the physical body of ordinary life. Like the Osis and Haraldsson patients, some saw relatives who had already died or beings of light who might be designated as angels or some other kind of religious figure. These fetching apparitions, whether deceased relatives or figures of light, were generally experienced as loving personalities. The characteristic mood of the passage through bodily death was of joy, love and peace. Since all the cases studied by Moody were ones in which there was recovery from apparent death, they included the experience of a return to the physical body, which return was often made reluctantly. It is interesting also to note that there were frequent reports of a being of light who presented a review of the patient's past life. Since, however, this review was not accompanied by any hint of praise or blame, it does not seem to correspond to the 'judgment' expected in many religious traditions.

Moody's model of the typical death experience includes such factors as the passage through darkness to light, feelings of peace, and the experiencing of beings of light. From a single limited sample, we cannot judge how widespread are these characteristics, and how far they are to be found in all death experiences or only in a limited number of them. The model needs further confirmation; it is to be hoped that it will be further tested in the not too distant future. Such confirmatory research has already been started by Professor Kenneth Ring of the University of Connecticut (Ring, 1980). Ring found that about 48% of the sample to be studied conformed to Moody's model to some extent. The feeling of peace was experienced by 60% of the patient's studied, separation from the physical body (the OBE) in 37% of the cases. Entering the darkness was reported in 23% of the cases, but the experience of light seems to have been less common. This partial confirmation of Moody's model, together with the confirmation provided by the work of Osis and Haraldsson, seems to indicate that something like the Moody model is likely to prove valid for at least some kinds of dying. No doubt later research will lead to some modification of the model, but if the general lines of what is indicated both by Moody and by Osis and Haraldsson are confirmed, this will add some important evidence for the reality of survival further supporting that earlier given by the study of communicators ostensibly from the next world, from reported memories of past lives, from apparitions of the departed, etc. It may do more than this and add something important to knowledge of what happens to the stream of consciousness at and after bodily death. On both counts, the study of the dying would seem to be a field of research well deserving further exploration.

It may reasonably be asked what is the use of scientific research into the problem of survival. Cannot this question be left to the religions? Certainly it may be so left for those who accept without question the

authoritative statements of one of the religions and who do not feel any further curiosity about matters on which religious authority has pronounced. This is not an unreasonable attitude. The intuitions of those who are spiritually enlightened may be as reliable a source of information as a scientific investigation. There still remains the question of what scientific investigation can find out about the matter. If there is a conscious life after bodily death, our science is incomplete until it includes this fact. Even the devout may be interested to know how far science confirms what they believe on religious grounds. Those who do not accept religious authority are wholly dependent on such scientific investigation for any opinion they may have that is not based on mere prejudice. We may ask, however, whether it is of any importance that they should have soundly based opinions on the subject.

I think it may reasonably be argued that this is of some practical importance. The death of the body is an event that will take place in the lives of all of us. Any knowledge we can obtain about it may help us to take a rational attitude towards it. Some of the current typical attitudes towards death do not seem to be altogether rational. There is, for example, the total avoidance of the subject of death as a topic of speech or even of thought. Such a complete tabu on the subject of death is not perhaps the best preparation for a rational facing of it when it comes. I remember the Swami Omananda Puri (an Irish woman who had entered a Hindu religious order) remarking that she was glad that she had been educated in a Roman Catholic school where she had to meditate for ten minutes each day on her own death, so she could not have developed the unawareness of death that she found in her grandchildren. To most people at the present time, ten minutes a day might seem an excessive time for a child to spend in thinking about death, but it may be better for the soul's health than a total banishment of the subject from one's thinking.

Another modern practice which may need modification in the light of better knowledge about dying and the possibility of a future life is that of regarding the prolongation of bodily life as a reasonable aim of geriatric medicine, even when increasing infirmity has robbed physical life of its meaningfulness. Allowing the physical body to die in peace and dignity would seem to be a more rational way of transition to another life if that is what dying really is.

To preserve a rational attitude towards dying, we need to know what death really is. That is one of the tasks of parapsychology. There seem to be many converging lines of evidence which suggest that it is the passage to another life, but we cannot yet be certain that this is the case. It is a future task of parapsychology to reduce to a minimum this uncertainty and to find out all we can about the nature of this future life. This task is very far from being yet completed.

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